the history of

laurel canyon

by David McGowan

● Joni Mitchell ● Graham Nash ● Frank Zappa ● Cass Elliott ● Jackson Browne ●
● Chris Hillman ● Paul Wolfowitz ● "Papa" John Phillips ● Roger McGuinn ● Glen Frey ● Jim Morrison ●
● the Birds ● Phil Ochs ● the Turtles ● the Doors ● Phil Spector ● Neil Young ● Richard Perle ●
● Charlie Manson ● the Rand Corporation ● Abigail Folger ● Roman Polanski ● the Haight ●
● and their very close military/cia/crime connections ●

WARNING

This eMagazine contains coroners images of brutal murders. If you don't want to see them, if they'll offend you, now is the time to stop reading and toss it in the trash.

Otherwise, this is a great story for kids of all ages!

Vladimir Lenin once said,

"*The best way to control the opposition is to lead it.*"

The '60's counter-culture may have been more controlled than people realize.

Leary drank his wine and drifted a bit, talking about his current favorite subject, outer space. I brought the conversation back to the subject of mind control, telling Leary some of the details I'd learned about the CIA's use of drugs for thirty years in their attempt to find the perfect "*recruitment pill, aphrodisiac, and amnesia drug.*"

I explained the magnitude of the story and I told him that, based on my interviews with survivors of the experiments and psycho scientists who'd done some of them, I had to conclude that the CIA had long ago reached their goal of creating the perfect security device short of assassination -- one which controlled the human mind.

I told Leary that, based on some of the documents I'd read, it seemed that he could have been just one of many scientist who'd been used without his knowledge by the CIA to conduct their mind control experiments.

"I've known this for ten years," Leary said.

"You were witting of it?" I asked in surprise.

"Of course," Leary said, leaning back in his chair with confidence.

I couldn't believe my ears. The CIA had created the "Psychedelic Sixties" with Timothy Leary's help?

"You were wittingly used by the CIA?" I asked again. "...During the sixties? You knew you were being used by the CIA?....."

"I knew I was being used by the intelligence agents of this country."

"I'm asking you what was the CIA's motive? What were you used for?" I said again.

"The CIA recognized what you probably haven't recognized yet, that I'm a very important national asset..."

"What can I say,?" Leary said.

He lit his half-smoked joint and continued.

"Yeah. I saw in nineteen sixty-two or three, that there was a world struggle for the control of minds. That's a crude way to say it..."

"I saw, after Hiroshima, there would never be a big world war. World war would be at the neurological level, not at the level of tanks and planes and bombs..."

"I proceeded as an intelligence agent since 1962, understanding that the next war for control of this planet and beyond, had to do with the control of consciousness. So I had to think very carefully about that..."

"I wanted my side to win the war..."

"There's no winning or losing... but I wanted my side to stake out enough territory..."

"I'm talking about time territory, not space territory..."

"Of course, you need enough space territory to get your time to make sure that the particular version of the territory of consciousness I would be represented in... I believed, after studying all the other versions, that my philosophy of the future... skip philosophy... my Clausewitz tactics and strategy, or my natural chauvinistic consciousness commitments were very fierce and strong..."

"I wanted my species to be recognized, understood and have a strong single voice in creating the reality of the future..."

"I wanted to create a segment of the future which I felt I would be the spokesman for..."

I let him talk. When he paused to catch his thoughts which had drifted away on a puff of muggles, I repeated the question: "Did you ever wittingly work for the CIA?"

"Yes," he answered strongly. "I was a witting agent of the CIA."

- From W.H Bowarts,
"Lords Of The Revolution: Timothy Leary and the CIA"

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Jimi Hendrix
Neil Young
Jack Nicholson
Warren Beatty
Bruce Dern
Tim Buckley
Jeff Buckley
Duane Allman
Harry Houdini
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Marina Elizabeth Habe
Roman Polanski
Warren Zevon
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PNAC
CIA
Brandon DeWilde
Kenneth Anger
Mickey Dolenz
Van Dyke Parks
Ricky Nelson
Military Intelligence

The History
Of Laurel Canyon

and all of the children, with flowers in their hair

The History Of Laurel Canyon

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and the United States Civilian Counter Culture Authority (USCCCA)

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The Sound Track for this book is available for $2.43 with any certified organic food donation to:
Stop-Children-What's-That-Sound Music™ only with the coupons on the following three pages.
The sound track includes the world famous Buffalo Springfield and their 60s hit, "For What It's Worth,"
Thunderclap Newman's masterpiece, "Something In The Air" with Humble Pie belting out "30 Days In The Hole,"
and the unforgettable, honest, bold and forthright criticism of the government by Barry McGuire with "Eve Of Destruction".
A critical musical tour-de-force for anyone searching for the truth. All rights reserved through May, 2011.

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and all of the children, with flowers in their hair

the Hippies

Why would a generation of rebellious teens decide to call themselves freaks, drop out, tune out and take drugs like LSD while preaching free love, peace and music?

That's not an easy question to answer.

Is it possible that the entire "counter culture movement" was an experiment in social control and opinion management by a secretive group of select elites intent on ruling societies with an iron fist.

Could the anti-war movement associated with freaks and hippies and dirty, long-haired, unshaven, unemployed, youthful drug users living in some strange fantasy world been cast in stone, or at least on paper before it even began?

Could the hippies have been a pre-designed social movement to turn people off to the anti-war sentiment that had been steadily growing amongst the American intellectuals?

Was it a prelude to todays "Prozac World" and the frantic attempt to develop mind altering "happy pills" to cure every ill and could this all be related to the 1960s counter culture development?

Who were all of these young musicians that appeared on the scene in the 60s? Who were their parents? Their friends? Their associates?

Things aren't always as they seem …

Having grown up at the tail end of the 60s movement and having engaged myself headstrong in what was left of the movement between 1969 and 1973-4, this period was and is of particular interest to me from an historic perspective.

It's the foundation of my youth.

The material and substance of the society I grew and matured in as a young man edging into adulthood.

This makes it a horror story, right?

We'll see …

My most sincere
"*thanks*" Dave …

Central Intelligence Agency

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David McGowan

You can read the first section of his book Programmed to Kill, parts 1 through 6, the part that deals with what Dave calls "the Pedophocracy", online at the link below. It's disturbing material gleaned from what I consider reliable sources with references and citations to support the information. Quite frankly, it's more than disturbing and it's frightening at the very least.

Programmed To Kill 1-6
http://www.whale.to/b/pedophocracy.html

You can also visit Daves web site for more of his writing and other news, the Center For An Informed America with his newsletter, sections on 911, the Apollo Mission (*Wagging the Moondoggie*) and of course, Laurel Canyon reproduced here. The web site hasn't been updated since 2008 but he seems to be active on the internet here and there, still.

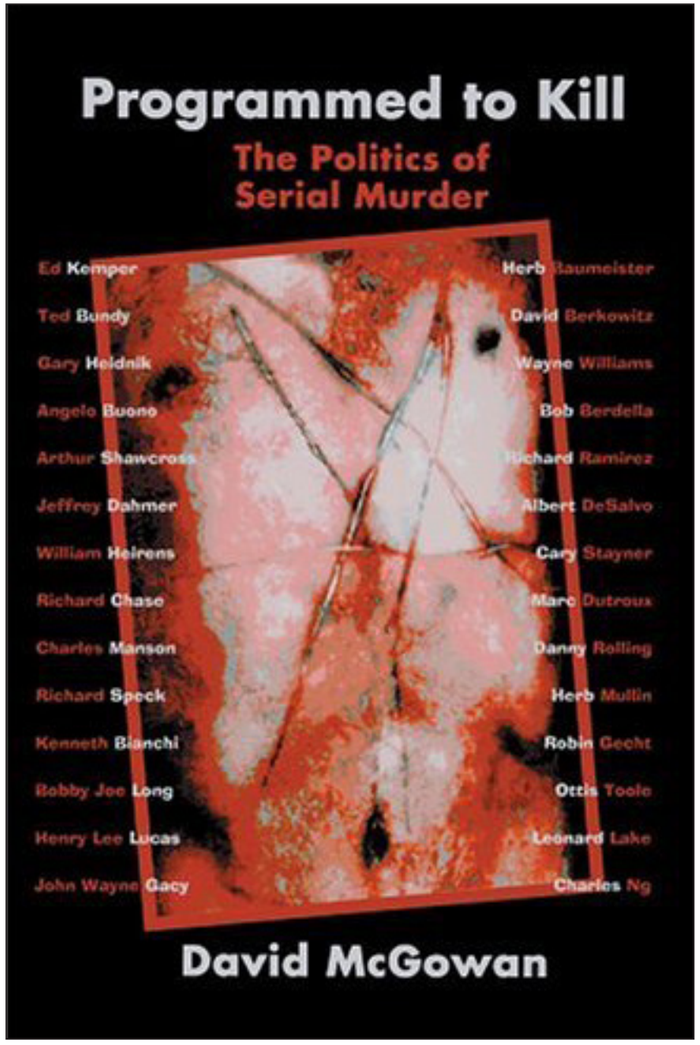
Daves Web Site
http://www.davesweb.cnchost.com/

Books by David McGowan

A Dialogue with the Devil
The Pedophocracy
Ruminations on Littleton, Mind Control, and JFK

Is it really mere coincidence that the very acts that child survivors of ritual abuse all across the country claim to have witnessed and participated in – cannibalism, bestiality, pedophilia, torture, mutilation, dismemberment, etc. – are the same depraved acts that are the stock-in-trade of America's serial killers? Other books and essays include:

Anatomy of a School Shooting [Columbine High School,CO)
Henry – Portrait of an MK-ULTRA Assassin?
What Really Happened to Flight 93?
CNN – The CIA's News Network?
There's Something About Henry
Wagging the Moondoggie
Finders Keepers



Dave says:

"*Programmed to Kill, my latest offering, takes the reader on a dark and troubling journey over some rough, and likely unfamiliar, terrain. Just as Understanding the F-Word was an alternative look at twentieth-century American political history, Programmed to Kill is an alternative look at violent crime in twentieth-century America. This may seem, at first glance, like a radical departure from my previous books — until one realizes that in this modern world that we inhabit, there is no discernible difference between crime and politics. If you aren't yet convinced of that, you might be after you finish reading this book.*"

The Turtles

Laurel Canyon has long had an uncomfortable relationship with flammables.

The 1930s saw more middle-class growth, but in 1947, the Army Air Corps brought the movies here again. Having built an air force base-turned-top-secret movie production house atop Wonderland Park Avenue (1352d Motion Picture Squadron), the Corps shot military training films and documentaries here until the makeshift studio was decommissioned in 1969.

In the 50s, Beat poet Wulf Zendik moved into the canyon with his lover, Arol, and started the first of many incarnations of his organic, sustainable, cult-like Zendik Farm. Conversely, modern architects came to grade hillsides and erect modern Case Study Houses and tract homes that had little to do with the canyon's woodsy charm and everything to do with stylized glamour. During this time, Dennis Hopper, James Dean, and Marlon Brando all had homes here.

It was the 1960s and 1970s that gave Laurel Canyon its most lasting reputation: First as The Haight-Ashbury of LA and then simply The Rock'n'Roll Canyon. The Mamas and the Papas, Dusty Springfield, Carole King, Linda Ronstadt, and Brian Wilson lived in the canyon. Joni Mitchell wrote "*Ladies of the Canyon*" while living here with Graham Nash; he wrote one of my favorite songs, "*Our House*," for her.

Perhaps not so amazingly, the house Graham sang about in "*Our House*"…burned to the ground.

Jim Morrison, who also lived in the area, referred to Laurel Canyon and its famous Laurel Canyon Country Store in his song "*Love Street*". The store has actually been around since the 1930s, but its flower-power signage is a holdover from its 60s heyday, when the famous musicians in the area would come here to jam. The LCCS is still popular today with neighborhood locals, and you can still see (*semi*-) hippies hanging outside in the sun, poring over the free LA Weekly and the community bulletin board.

But this era of the canyon wasn't all peace and love as we're about to find out. A few cults have been said to set up shop here, namely one in which children were ritually abused. Drugs sometimes sent residents out of their windows and into a different plane of reality. And, some chilling deaths took place in them thar hills. In 1968, former silent film star Ramon Navarro was murdered by two male prostitutes in his home. In 1969, the body of a woman known only as Jane Doe #59 was found up near Mulholland Drive, having been stabbed an epic 157 times. There's much, much more.

One Laurel Canyon murder scene, though, trumps them all. The drug-fueled party that had begun in the late 1960s was all but over by 1981, with The Wonderland Murders. Three drug dealers and one unfortunate guest were brutally killed at 8763 Wonderland Avenue, while legendary porn star, John Holmes, and legendary club owner/drug dealer/gangster Eddie Nash, were there; both men were, at different times, the main suspects in the murders. If you ever want to see what life in Laurel Canyon was like during this scary time, be sure to watch the 2003 movie Wonderland.

"There's something happening here,
what it is ain't exactly clear"

Join me now, if you have the time, as we take a stroll down memory lane to a time nearly four-and-a-half decades ago – a time when America last had uniformed ground troops fighting a sustained and bloody battle to impose, uhmm, 'democracy' on a sovereign nation.

*Pb Note: I was 9 years old when this story begins but at 15 years-old, just 6 years more, I was on it like red paint on a fire engine. Was I programmed?

"might makes right"

It is the first week of August, 1964, and U.S. warships under the command of U.S. Navy Admiral George Stephen Morrison have allegedly come under attack while patrolling Vietnam's Tonkin Gulf. This event, subsequently dubbed the '*Tonkin Gulf Incident*,' will result in the immediate passing by the U.S. Congress of the obviously pre-drafted Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which will, in turn, quickly lead to America's deep immersion into the bloody Vietnam quagmire. Before it is over, well over fifty thousand American bodies – along with literally millions of Southeast Asian bodies – will litter the battlefields of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

For the record, the Tonkin Gulf Incident appears to differ somewhat from other alleged provocations that have driven this country to war. This was not, as we have seen so many times before, a '*false flag*' operation (*which is to say, an operation that involves Uncle Sam attacking himself and then pointing an accusatory finger at someone else*). It was also not, as we have also seen on more than one occasion, an attack that was quite deliberately provoked. No, what the Tonkin Gulf incident actually was, as it turns out, is an 'attack' that never took place at all. The entire incident, as has been all but officially acknowledged, was spun from whole cloth. (*It is quite possible, however, that the intent was to provoke a defensive response, which could then be cast as an unprovoked attack on U.S ships. The ships in question were on an intelligence mission and were operating in a decidedly provocative manner. It is quite possible that when Vietnamese forces failed to respond as anticipated, Uncle Sam decided to just pretend as though they had*.)

Nevertheless, by early February 1965, the U.S. will – without a declaration of war and with no valid reason to wage one – begin indiscriminately bombing North Vietnam. By March of that same year, the infamous "*Operation Rolling Thunder*" will have commenced. Over the course of the next three-and-a-half years, millions of tons of bombs, missiles, rockets, incendiary devices and chemical warfare agents will be dumped on the people of Vietnam in what can only be described as one of the worst crimes against humanity ever perpetrated on this planet. The military industrial chemical corporate complex made billions. So did coroners.

"war, what is it good for? absolutely nothin!"

Also in March of 1965, the first uniformed U.S. soldier will officially set foot on Vietnamese soil (*although Special Forces units masquerading as 'advisers' and 'trainers' had been*

there for at least four years, and likely much longer). By April 1965, fully 25,000 uniformed American kids, most still teenagers barely out of high school, will be slogging through the rice paddies of Vietnam. By the end of the year, U.S. troop strength will have surged to 200,000.

meanwhile ... our story begins ...

Elsewhere in the world in those early months of 1965, a new '*scene*' is just beginning to take shape in the city of Los Angeles. In a geographically and socially isolated community known as Laurel Canyon – a heavily wooded, rustic, serene, yet vaguely ominous slice of LA nestled in the hills that separate the Los Angeles basin from the San Fernando Valley – musicians, singers and songwriters suddenly begin to gather as though summoned there by some unseen Pied Piper. Within months, the '*hippie/flower child*' movement will be given birth there, along with the new style of music that will provide the soundtrack for the tumultuous second half of the 1960s.

An uncanny number of rock music superstars will emerge from Laurel Canyon beginning in the mid-1960s and carrying through the decade of the 1970s. The first to drop an album will be The Byrds, whose biggest star will prove to be David Crosby. The band's debut effort, "Mr. Tambourine Man," will be released on the Summer Solstice of 1965. It will quickly be followed by releases from the John Phillips-led Mamas and the Papas ("If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears," January 1966), Love with Arthur Lee ("Love," May 1966), Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention ("Freak Out," June 1966), Buffalo Springfield, featuring Stephen Stills and Neil Young ("Buffalo Springfield," October 1966), and The Doors ("The Doors," January 1967).

military connections everywhere

One of the earliest on the Laurel Canyon/Sunset Strip scene is Jim Morrison, the enigmatic lead singer of The Doors. Jim will quickly become one of the most iconic, controversial, critically acclaimed, and influential figures to take up residence in Laurel Canyon. Curiously enough though, the self-proclaimed "*Lizard King*" has another claim to fame as well, albeit one that none of his numerous chroniclers will feel is of much relevance to his career and possible untimely death: he is the son, as it turns out, of the aforementioned Admiral George Stephen Morrison.

And so it is that, even while the father is actively conspiring to fabricate an incident that will be used to massively accelerate an illegal war, the son is positioning himself to become an icon of the '*hippie*'/anti-war crowd. Nothing unusual about that, I suppose. It is, you know, a small world and all that. And it is not as if Jim Morrison's story is in any way unique.

During the early years of its heyday, Laurel Canyon's father figure is the rather eccentric personality known as Frank Zappa. Though he and his various Mothers of Invention line-ups will never attain the commercial success of the band headed by the admiral's son, Frank will be a hugely influential figure among his contemporaries. Ensconced in an abode dubbed the '*Log Cabin*' – which sat right in the heart of Laurel Canyon, at the crossroads of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Lookout Mountain Avenue – Zappa will play host to virtually every musician who passes through the canyon in the mid- to late-1960s. He will also discover and sign numerous acts to his various Laurel Canyon-based record labels. Many of these acts will be rather bizarre and somewhat obscure characters (*think Captain Beefheart and Larry "Wild Man" Fischer*), but some of them, such as psychedelic rocker cum shock-rocker Alice Cooper, will go on to superstardom.

the cabin

Zappa, along with certain members of his sizable entourage (*the 'Log Cabin' was run as an early commune, with numerous hangers-on occupying various rooms in the main house and the guest house, as well as in the peculiar caves*

Admiral Morrson, then a captain, with his son, Jim, on the bridge of the U.S.S. Bon Homme Richard, January 1964

and tunnels lacing the grounds of the home; far from the quaint homestead the name seems to imply, by the way, the 'Log Cabin' was a cavernous five-level home that featured a 2,000+ square-foot living room with three massive chandeliers and an enormous floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace), will also be instrumental in introducing the look and attitude that will define the '*hippie*' counterculture (*although the Zappa crew preferred the label 'Freak'*). Nevertheless, Zappa (*born, curiously enough, on the Winter Solstice of 1940*) never really made a secret of the fact that he had nothing but contempt for the '*hippie*' culture that he helped create and that he surrounded himself with.

edgewood arsenal

Given that Zappa was, by numerous accounts, a rigidly authoritarian control-freak and a supporter of U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia, it is perhaps not surprising that he would not feel a kinship with the youth movement that he helped nurture. And it is probably safe to say that Frank's dad also had little regard for the youth culture of the 1960s, given that Francis Zappa was, in case you were wondering, a chemical warfare specialist assigned to – where else? – the Edgewood Arsenal.

mk-ultra and chemical warfare

Edgewood is, of course, the longtime home of America's chemical warfare program, as well as a facility frequently cited as being deeply enmeshed in MK-ULTRA operations. Curiously enough, Frank Zappa literally grew up at the Edgewood Arsenal, having lived the first seven years of his life in military housing on the grounds of the facility. The family later moved to Lancaster, California, near Edwards Air Force Base, where Francis Zappa continued to busy himself with doing classified work for the military/intelligence complex. His son, meanwhile, prepped himself to become an icon of the peace & love crowd. Again, nothing unusual about that, I suppose.

in come the marines ...

Zappa's manager, by the way, is a shadowy character by the name of Herb Cohen, who had come out to L.A. from the Bronx with his brother Mutt just before the music and club scene began heating up. Cohen, a former U.S. Marine, had spent a few years traveling the world before his arrival on the Laurel Canyon scene. Those travels, curiously, had taken him to the Congo in 1961, at the very time that leftist Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was being tortured and killed by our very own CIA. Not to worry though; according to one of Zappa's biographers, Cohen wasn't in the Congo on some kind of nefarious intelligence mission. No, he was there, believe it or not, to supply arms to Lumumba "*in defiance of the CIA*." Because, you know, that is the kind of thing that globetrotting ex-Marines did in those days (*as we'll see soon enough when we take a look at another Laurel Canyon luminary*).

... and the navy

Making up the other half of Laurel Canyon's First Family is Frank's wife, Gail Zappa, known formerly as Adelaide Sloatman. Gail hails from a long line of career Naval officers, including her father, who spent his life working on classified nuclear weapons research for the U.S. Navy. Gail herself had once worked as a secretary for the Office of Naval Research and Development (*she also once told an interviewer that she had "heard voices all [her] life"*). Many years before their nearly simultaneous arrival in Laurel Canyon, Gail had attended a Naval kindergarten with "*Mr. Mojo Risin*'" himself, Jim Morrison (*it's claimed that, as children, Gail once hit Jim over the head with a hammer*). The very same Jim Morrison had later attended the same Alexandria, Virginia high school as two other future Laurel Canyon luminaries – John Phillips (top right) and Cass Elliott (far right).

The Mamas and the Papas

rock stars don't just pop up, they're created - the summer of love

"*Papa*" John Phillips, more so than probably any of the other illustrious residents of Laurel Canyon, will play a major role in spreading the emerging youth '*counterculture*' across America. His contribution will be two-fold:

first, he will co-organize (*along with Charlie Manson associate Terry Melcher*) the famed Monterrey Pop Festival, which, through unprecedented media exposure, will give mainstream America its first real look at the music and fashions of the nascent '*hippie*' movement.

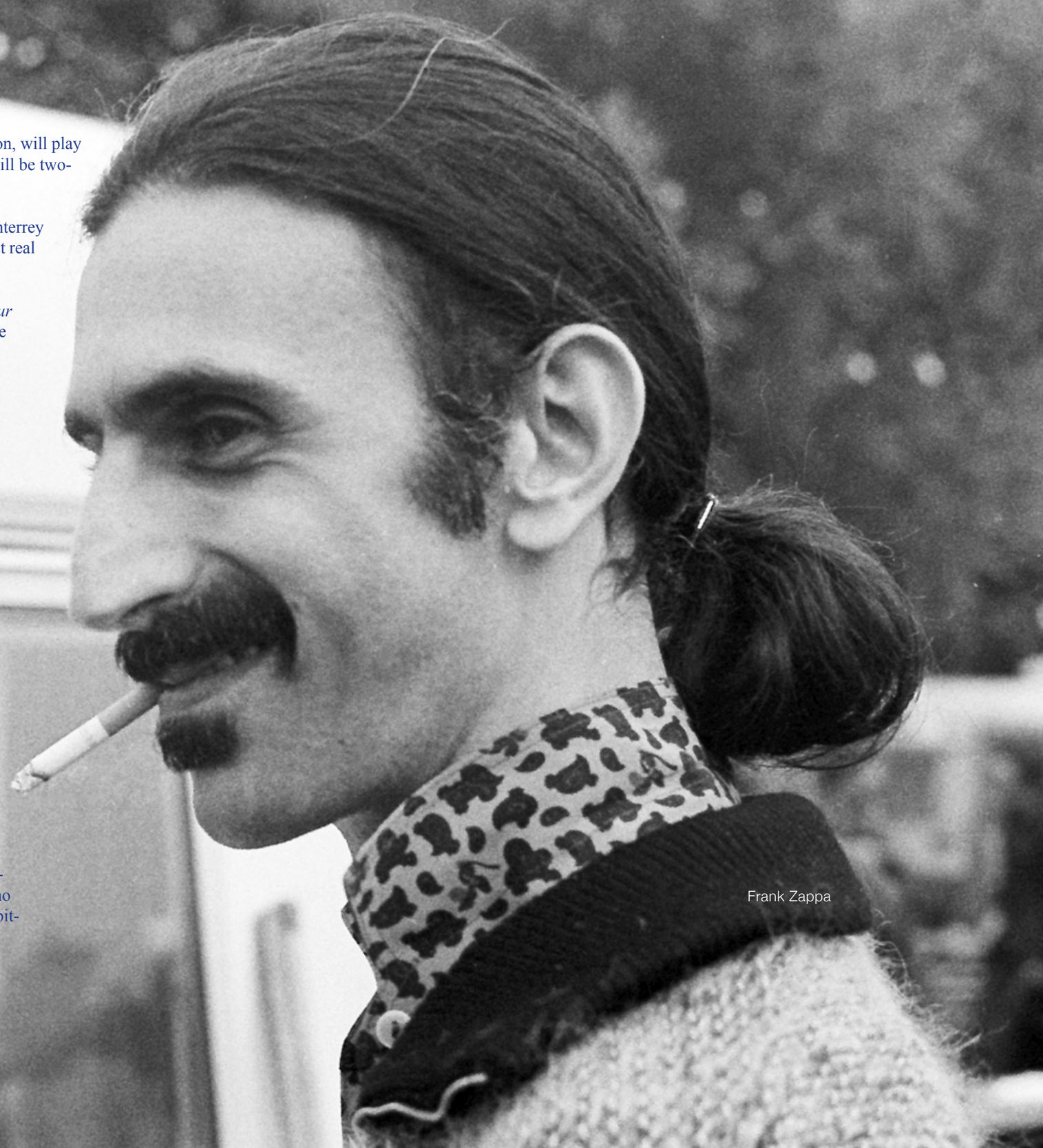
Second, Phillips will pen an insipid song known as "*San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)*," which will quickly rise to the top of the charts. Along with the Monterrey Pop Festival, the song will be instrumental in luring the disenfranchised (*a preponderance of whom are underage runaways*) to San Francisco to create the Haight-Asbury phenomenon and the famed 1967 "*Summer of Love.*"

us naval academy at annapolis

Before arriving in Laurel Canyon and opening the doors of his home to the soon-to-be famous, the already famous, and the infamous (*such as the aforementioned Charlie Manson, whose 'Family' also spent time at the Log Cabin and at the Laurel Canyon home of "Mama" Cass Elliot, which, in case you didn't know, sat right across the street from the Laurel Canyon home of Abigail Folger and Voytek Frykowski, but let's not get ahead of ourselves here*), John Edmund Andrew Phillips was, shockingly enough, yet another child of the military/intelligence complex. The son of U.S. Marine Corp Captain Claude Andrew Phillips and a mother who claimed to have psychic and telekinetic powers, John attended a series of elite military prep schools in the Washington, D.C. area, culminating in an appointment to the prestigious U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis.

the founding fathers • racism
cloak and dagger stuff and the pentagon

After leaving Annapolis, John married Susie Adams, a direct descendant of '*Founding Father*' John Adams. Susie's father, James Adams, Jr., had been involved in what Susie described as "*cloak-and-dagger stuff with the Air Force in Vienna,*" or what we like to call covert intelligence operations. Susie herself would later find employment at the Pentagon, alongside John Phillip's older sister, Rosie, who dutifully reported to work at the complex for nearly thirty years. John's mother, 'Dene' Phillips, also worked for most of her life for the federal government in some unspecified capacity. And John's older brother, Tommy, was a battle-scarred former U.S. Marine who found work as a cop on the Alexandria police force, albeit one with a disciplinary record for exhibiting a violent streak when dealing with people of color.



Frank Zappa

the cuban revolution

John Phillips, of course – though surrounded throughout his life by military/intelligence personnel – did not involve himself in such matters. Or so we are to believe. Before succeeding in his musical career, however, John did seem to find himself, quite innocently of course, in some rather unusual places. One such place was Havana, Cuba, where Phillips arrived at the very height of the Cuban Revolution. For the record, Phillips has claimed that he went to Havana as nothing more than a concerned private citizen, with the intention of – you're going to love this one – "*fighting for Castro*." Because, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of folks in those days traveled abroad to thwart CIA operations before taking up residence in Laurel Canyon and joining the '*hippie*' generation. During the two weeks or so that the Cuban Missile Crisis played out, a few years after Castro took power, Phillips found himself cooling his heels in Jacksonville, Florida – alongside, coincidentally I'm sure, the Mayport Naval Station.

for what it's worth

Anyway, let's move on to yet another of Laurel Canyon's earliest and brightest stars, Mr. Stephen Stills. Stills will have the distinction of being a founding member of two of Laurel Canyon's most acclaimed and beloved bands: the iconic Buffalo Springfield (*now's the time to go listen to, "For What It's Worth," and pay attention to the words*), and, needless to say, Crosby, Stills & Nash. In addition, Stills will pen perhaps the first, and certainly one of the most enduring anthems of the 60s generation, "*For What It's Worth*," the opening lines of which appear at the top of this post (*Stills' follow-up single will be entitled "Bluebird," which, coincidentally or not, happens to be the original codename assigned to the MK-ULTRA program*).

more troops

Before his arrival in Laurel Canyon, Stephen Stills was (**yawn yet?**) the product of yet another career military family. Raised partly in Texas, young Stephen spent large swaths of his childhood in El Salvador, Costa

Neil Young (center) and Stephen Stills (far right)

Rica, the Panama Canal Zone, and various other parts of Central America – alongside his father, who was, we can be fairly certain, helping to spread '*democracy*' to the unwashed masses in that endearingly American way. As with the rest of our cast of characters, Stills was educated primarily at schools on military bases and at elite military academies. Among his contemporaries in Laurel Canyon, he was widely viewed as having an abrasive, authoritarian personality. Nothing unusual about any of that, of course, as we have already seen with the rest of our cast of characters.

There is, however, an even more curious aspect to the Stephen Stills story: Stephen will later tell anyone who will sit and listen that he had served time for Uncle Sam in the jungles of Vietnam. These tales will be universally dismissed by chroniclers of the era as nothing more than drug-induced delusions. Such a thing couldn't possibly be true, it will be claimed, since Stills arrived on the Laurel Canyon scene at the very time that the first uniformed troops began shipping out and he remained in the public eye thereafter. And it will of course be quite true that Stephen Stills could not have served with uniformed ground troops in Vietnam, but what will be ignored is the undeniable fact that the U.S. had thousands of '*advisers*' – which is to say, CIA/Special Forces operatives – operating in the country for a good many years before the arrival of the first official ground troops. What will also be ignored is that, given his background, his age, and the time-line of events, Stephen Stills not only could indeed have seen action in Vietnam, he would seem to have been a prime candidate for such an assignment. After which, of course, he could rather quickly become – stop me if you've heard this one before – an icon of the peace generation.

military intelligence required

Another of those icons, and one of Laurel Canyon's most flamboyant residents, is a young man by the name of David Crosby, founding member of the seminal Laurel Canyon band the Byrds, as well as, of course, Crosby, Stills & Nash. Crosby is, not surprisingly, the son of an Annapolis graduate and WWII military intelligence officer, Major Floyd Delafield Crosby. Like others in this story, Floyd Crosby spent much of his post-service time traveling the world. Those travels landed him in places like Haiti, where he paid a visit in 1927, when the country just happened to be, coincidentally of course, under military occupation by the U.S. Marines. One of the Marines doing that occupying was a guy that we met earlier by the name of Captain Claude Andrew Phillips. Floyd went on to make films for his entire life. His filmography can be found at:
http://www.cinematographers.nl/GreatDoPh/crosby.htm

alexander hamilton, john jay,
senators, congressman, governors, mayors and judges

But David Crosby is much more than just the son of Major Floyd Delafield Crosby. David Van Cortlandt Crosby, as it turns out, is a scion of the closely intertwined Van Cortlandt, Van Schuyler and Van Rensselaer families. And while you're probably thinking, "*the Van Who families?*," I can assure you that if you plug those names in over at Wikipedia, you can spend a pretty fair amount of time reading up on the power wielded by this clan for the last, oh, two-and-a-quarter centuries or so. Suffice it to say that the Crosby family tree includes a truly dizzying array of US senators and congressmen, state senators and assemblymen, governors, mayors, judges, Supreme Court justices, Revolutionary and Civil War generals, signers of the Declaration of Independence, and members of the Continental Congress. It also includes, I should hasten to add – for those of you with a taste for such things – more than a few high-ranking Masons. Stephen Van Rensselaer III, for example, reportedly served as Grand Master of Masons for New York. And if all that isn't impressive enough, according to the New England Genealogical Society, David Van Cortlandt Crosby is also a direct descendant of '*Founding Fathers*' and Federalist Papers' authors Alexander Hamilton and John Jay.

*Pb Note: see this link for the connection between Alexander Hamilton, the Rothschilds and our US Constitution written and published by my good friend Gary Rea which explains the Federalists perspective; the bankers manipulations early in US history that they don't teach in school and how it led to the absolute mess we find ourselves in today, "How The Republic Died In 1787" ©2010:

http://ppjg.me/2010/03/26/how-the-american-republic-died-at-philadelphia-in-1787/

If there is, as many believe, a network of elite families that has shaped national and world events for a very long time, then it is probably safe to say that David Crosby is a bloodline member of that clan (*which may explain, come to think of it, why his semen seems to be in such demand in certain circles – because, if we're being honest here, it certainly can't be due to his looks or talent.*) If America had royalty, then David Crosby would probably be a Duke, or a Prince, or something similar (*I'm not really sure how that shit works*). But other than that, he is just a normal, run-of-the-mill kind of guy who just happened to shine as one of Laurel Canyon's brightest stars. And who, I guess I should add, has a real fondness for guns, especially handguns, which he has maintained a sizable collection of for his entire life. According to those closest to him, it is a rare occasion when Mr. Crosby is not packing heat (*John Phillips also owned and sometimes carried handguns*). And according to Crosby himself, he has, on at least one occasion, discharged a firearm in anger at another human being. All of which made him, of course, an obvious choice for the Flower Children to rally around.

the pretender

Another shining star on the Laurel Canyon scene, just a few years later, will be singer-songwriter Jackson Browne, who is – are you getting as bored with this as I am? – the product of a career military family. Browne's father was assigned to post-war '*reconstruction*' work in Germany, which very likely means that he was in the employ of the OSS, precursor to the CIA. As readers of my "*Understanding the F-Word*" may recall, U.S. involvement in post-war reconstruction in Germany largely consisted of maintaining as much of the Nazi infrastructure as possible while shielding war criminals from capture and prosecution. Against that backdrop, Jackson Browne was born in a military hospital in Heidelberg, Germany. Some two decades later, he emerged as … oh, never mind.

america and the tin man

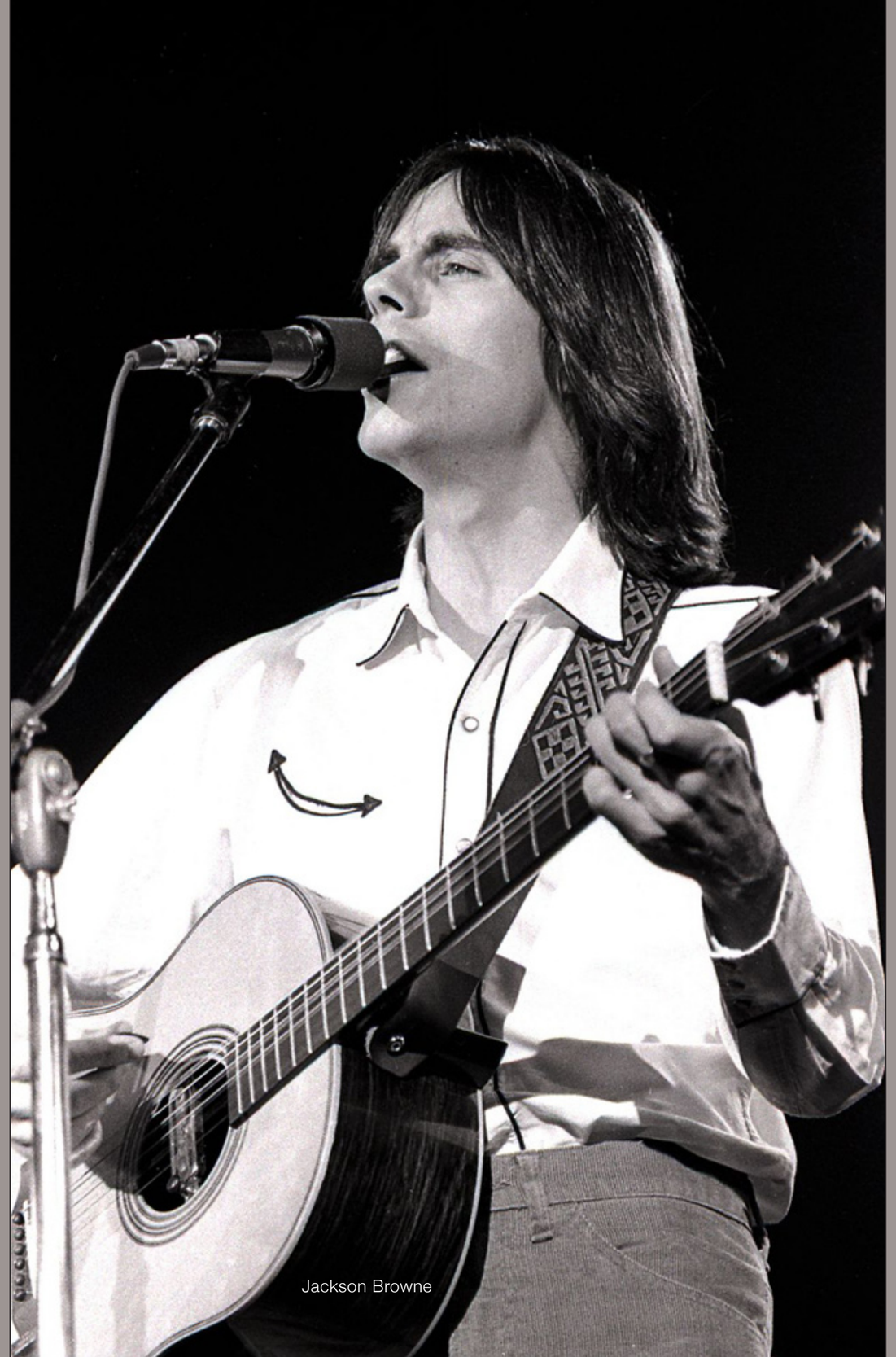
Let's talk instead about three other Laurel Canyon vocalists who will rise to dizzying heights of fame and fortune: Gerry Beckley, Dan Peek and Dewey Bunnell. Individually, these three names are probably unknown to virtually all readers; but collectively, as the band America, the three will score huge hits in the early '70s with such songs as "*Ventura Highway*," "*A Horse With No Name*," and the Wizard of Oz-themed "*The Tin Man.*" I guess I probably don't need to add here that all three of these lads were products of the military/intelligence community. Beckley's dad was the commander of the now-defunct West Ruislip USAF base near London, England, a facility deeply immersed in intelligence operations. Bunnell's and Peek's fathers were both career Air Force officers serving under Beckley's dad at West Ruislip, which is where the three boys first met.

mickey monkees in the citrus groves

We could also, I suppose, discuss Mike Nesmith of the Monkees and Cory Wells of Three Dog Night (*two more hugely successful Laurel Canyon bands*), who both arrived in LA not long after serving time with the U.S. Air Force. Nesmith also inherited a family fortune estimated at $25 million. Gram Parsons, who would briefly replace David Crosby in The Byrds before fronting The Flying Burrito Brothers, was the son of Major Cecil Ingram "*Coon Dog*" Connor II, a decorated military officer and bomber pilot who reportedly flew over 50 combat missions. Parsons was also an heir, on his mother's side, to the formidable Snively family fortune. Said to be the wealthiest family in the exclusive enclave of Winter Haven, Florida, the Snively family was the proud owner of Snively Groves, Inc., which reportedly owned as much as 1/3 of all the citrus groves in the state of Florida.

stumpy and the mental patients

And so it goes as one scrolls through the roster of Laurel Canyon superstars. What one finds, far more often than not, are the sons and daughters of the military/intelligence complex and the sons and daughters of extreme wealth and privilege – and oftentimes, you'll find both rolled into one convenient package. Every once in a while, you will also stumble across a former child actor, like the aforementioned Brandon DeWilde, or Monkee Mickey Dolenz,



Jackson Browne

or eccentric prodigy Van Dyke Parks. You might also encounter some former mental patients, such as James Taylor, who spent time in two different mental institutions in Massachusetts before hitting the Laurel Canyon scene, or Larry "Wild Man" Fischer, who was institutionalized repeatedly during his teen years, once for attacking his mother with a knife (*an act that was gleefully mocked by Zappa on the cover of Fischer's first album*). Finally, you might find the offspring of an organized crime figure, like Warren Zevon, the son of William "Stumpy" Zevon, a lieutenant for infamous LA crimelord Mickey Cohen.

move along, nothing to see here

All these folks gathered nearly simultaneously along the narrow, winding roads of Laurel Canyon. They came from across the country – although the Washington, DC area was noticeably over-represented – as well as from Canada and England. They came even though, at the time, there wasn't much of a pop music industry in Los Angeles.

They came even though, at the time, there was no live pop music scene to speak of.

They came even though, in retrospect, there was no discernable reason for them to do so.

But they were all here, together, in this small enclave of neighbors who knew neighbors and friends who knew friends. The military, the CIA, drugs, hippies and criminals.

lemmings |'lemi ng | noun • a person who unthinkingly joins a mass movement, esp. a headlong rush to destruction

It would, of course, make sense these days for an aspiring musician to venture out to Los Angeles. But in those days, the centers of the music universe were Nashville, Detroit and New York. It wasn't the industry that drew the Laurel Canyon crowd, you see, but rather the Laurel Canyon crowd that transformed Los Angeles into the epicenter of the music industry. To what then do we attribute this unprecedented gathering of future musical superstars in the hills above Los Angeles? What was it that inspired them all to head out west? Perhaps Neil Young said it best when he told an interviewer that he couldn't really say why he headed out to LA circa 1966; he and others

"*were just going like Lemmings*."

"He was great, he was unreal – really, really good."

"He had this kind of music that nobody else was doing.
I thought he really had something crazy, something great. He was like a living poet."

Today's first trivia question: both of the above statements were made, on separate occasions, by a famous Laurel Canyon musician of the 1960s era. Both quotes were offered up in praise of another Laurel Canyon musician. Award yourself five points for correctly identifying the person who made the remarks, and five more for identifying who the statements refer to. The answers are further down the pages.

In the first part of this saga, we met a sampling of some of the most successful and influential rock music superstars who emerged from Laurel Canyon during its glory days. But these were, alas, more than just musicians and singers and songwriters who had come together in the canyon; they were destined to become the spokesmen and de facto leaders of a generation of disaffected youth (*as Carl Gottlieb noted in David Crosby's co-written autobiography, "the unprecedented mass appeal of the new rock 'n' roll gave the singers a voice in public affairs."*) That, of course, makes it all the more curious that these icons were, to an overwhelming degree, the sons and daughters of the military/intelligence complex and the scions of families that have wielded vast wealth and power in this country for a very long time.

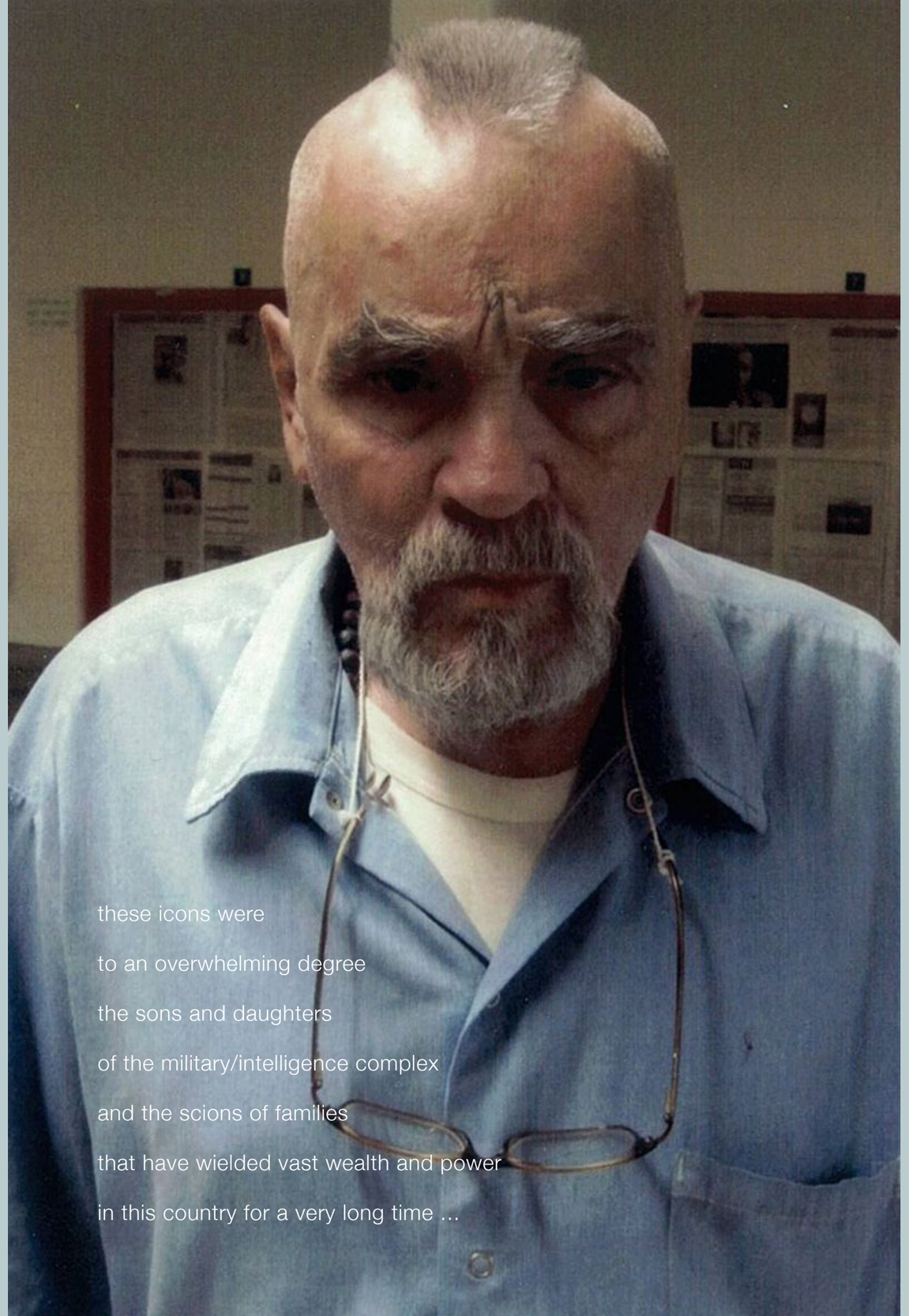
all playing on the same team

When I recently presented to a friend a truncated summary of the information contained in the first installment of this series, said friend opted to play the devil's advocate by suggesting that there was nothing necessarily nefarious in the fact that so many of these icons of a past generation hailed from military/intelligence families. Perhaps, he suggested, they had embarked on their chosen careers as a form of rebellion against the values of their parents. And that, I suppose, might be true in a couple of cases. But what are we to conclude from the fact that such an astonishing number of these folks (*along with their girlfriends, wives, managers, etc.*) hail from a similar background? Are we to believe that the only kids from that era who had musical talent were the sons and daughters of Navy Admirals, chemical warfare engineers and Air Force intelligence officers? Or are they just the only ones who were signed to lucrative contracts and relentlessly promoted by their labels and the media?

If these artists were rebelling against, rather than subtly promoting, the values of their parents, then why didn't they ever speak out against the folks they were allegedly rebelling against? Why did Jim Morrison never denounce, or even mention, his father's key role in escalating one of America's bloodiest illegal wars? And why did Frank Zappa never pen a song exploring the horrors of chemical warfare (*though he did pen a charming little ditty entitled "The Ritual Dance of the Child-Killer"*)? And which Mamas and Papas song was it that laid waste to the values and actions of John Phillip's parents and in-laws? And in which interview, exactly, did David Crosby and Stephen Stills disown the family values that they were raised with?

In the coming pages we'll take a much closer look at these folks, as well as at many of their contemporaries, as we endeavor to determine how and why the youth '*counterculture*' of the 1960s was given birth. According to virtually all the accounts that I have read, this was essentially a spontaneous, organic response to the war in Southeast Asia and to the prevailing social conditions of the time. '*Conspiracy theorists*,' of course, have frequently opined that what began as a legitimate movement was at some point co-opted and undermined by intelligence operations such as CoIntelPro. Entire books, for example, have been written examining how presumably virtuous musical artists were subjected to FBI harassment and/or whacked by the CIA.

Here we will, as you have no doubt already ascertained, take a decidedly different approach. The question that we will be tackling is a more deeply troubling one: "*what if the musicians themselves (and various other leaders and founders of the 'movement') were every bit as much a part of the intelligence community as the people who were*



supposedly harassing them?" What if, in other words, the entire youth culture of the 1960s was created not as a grass-roots challenge to the status quo, but as a cynical exercise in discrediting and marginalizing the budding anti-war movement and creating a fake opposition that could be easily controlled and led astray? And what if the harassment these folks were subjected to was largely a stage-managed show designed to give the leaders of the counterculture some much-needed '*street cred*'? What if, in reality, they were pretty much all playing on the same team?

I should probably mention here that, contrary to popular opinion, the '*hippie'/'flower child*' movement was not synonymous with the anti-war movement. As time passed, there was, to be sure, a fair amount of overlap between the two '*movements*.' And the mass media outlets, as is their wont, did their very best to portray the flower-power generation as the torch-bearers of the anti-war movement – because, after all, a ragtag band of unwashed, drug-fueled long-hairs sporting flowers and peace symbols was far easier to marginalize than, say, a bunch of respected college professors and their concerned students. The reality, however, is that the anti-war movement was already well underway before the first aspiring '*hippie*' arrived in Laurel Canyon. The first Vietnam War '*teach-in*' was held on the campus of the University of Michigan in March of 1965. The first organized walk on Washington occurred just a few weeks later. Needless to say, there were no '*hippies*' in attendance at either event. That '*problem*' would soon be rectified. And the anti-war crowd – those who were serious about ending the bloodshed in Vietnam, anyway – would be none too appreciative.

where the hell did the hippies come from?

As Barry Miles has written in his coffee-table book, "*Hippie*", there were some hippies involved in anti-war protests, "*particularly after the police riot in Chicago in 1968 when so many people got injured, but on the whole the movement activists looked on hippies with disdain.*" Peter Coyote, narrating the documentary "*Hippies*" on The History Channel, added that "*Some on the left even theorized that the hippies were the end result of a plot by the CIA to neutralize the anti-war movement with LSD, turning potential protestors into self-absorbed naval-gazers*."

abbie asks, where the hell?

An exasperated Abbie Hoffman once described the scene as he remembered it thusly: "*There were all these activists, you know, Berkeley radicals, White Panthers … all trying to stop the war and change things for the better. Then we got flooded with all these 'flower children' who were into drugs and sex. Where the hell did the hippies come from?!*"

As it turns out, they came, initially at least, from a rather private, isolated, largely self-contained neighborhood in Los Angeles known as Laurel Canyon (*in contrast to the other canyons slicing through the Hollywood Hills, Laurel Canyon has its own market, the semi-famous Laurel Canyon Country Store; its own deli and cleaners; its own elementary school, the Wonderland School; its own boutique shops and salons; and, in more recent years, its own celebrity reprogramming rehab facility named, as you may have guessed, the Wonderland Center. During its heyday, the canyon even had its own management company, Lookout Management, to handle the talent. At one time, it even had its own newspaper*.)

the 1965 march on washington - no hippies?

ripped off

One other thing that I should add here, before getting too far along with this series, is that this has not been an easy line of research for me to conduct, primarily because I have been, for as long as I can remember, a huge fan of 1960s music and culture. Though I was born in 1960 and therefore didn't come of age, so to speak, until the 1970s, I have always felt as though I was ripped off by being denied the opportunity to experience firsthand the era that I was so obviously meant to inhabit. During my high school and college years, while my peers were mostly into faceless corporate rock (*think Journey, Foreigner, Kansas, Boston, etc.*) and, perhaps worse yet, the twin horrors of New Wave and Disco music, I was faithfully spinning my Hendrix, Joplin and Doors albums (*which I still have, or rather my eldest daughter still has, in the original vinyl versions*) while my color organ (*remember those?*) competed with my black light and strobe light. I grew my hair long until well past the age when it should have been sheared off. I may have even strung beads across the doorway to my room, but it is possible that I am confusing my life with that of Greg Brady, who, as we all remember, once converted his dad's home office into a groovy bachelor pad.

mcgovern, carter and clinton

Anyway … as I have probably mentioned previously on more than one occasion, one of the most difficult aspects of this journey that I have been on for the last decade or so has been watching so many of my former idols and mentors fall by the wayside as it became increasingly clear to me that people who I once thought were the good guys were, in reality, something entirely different than what they appear to be. The first to fall, naturally enough, were the establishment figures – the politicians who I once, quite foolishly, looked up to as people who were fighting the good fight, within the confines of the system, to bring about real change. Though it now pains me to admit this, there was a time when I admired the likes of (*egads!*) George McGovern and Jimmy Carter, as well as (*oops, excuse me for a moment; I seem to have just thrown up in my mouth a little bit*) California pols Tom Hayden and Jerry Brown. I even had high hopes, oh-so-many-years-ago, for (*am I really admitting this in print?*) aspiring First Man Bill Clinton.

moonbeams over california - wonderlands glows red

Since I mentioned Jerry "*Governor Moonbeam*" Brown, by the way, I must now digress just a bit – and we all know how I hate it when that happens. But as luck would have it, Jerry Brown was, curiously enough, a longtime resident of a little place called Laurel Canyon. As readers of Programmed to Kill may recall, Brown lived on Wonderland Avenue, not too many doors down from 8763 Wonderland Avenue, the site of the infamous "*Four on the Floor*" murders, regarded by grizzled LA homicide detectives as the most bloody and brutal multiple murder in the city's very bloody history (*if you get a chance, by the way, check out "Wonderland" with Val Kilmer the next time it shows up on your cable listings; it is, by Hollywood standards, a reasonably accurate retelling of the crime, and a pretty decent film as well*).

As it turns out, you see, the most bloody mass murder in LA's history took place in one of the city's most serene, pastoral and exclusive neighborhoods. And strangely enough, the case usually cited as the runner-up for the title of bloodiest crime scene – the murders of Stephen Parent, Sharon Tate, Jay Sebring, Voytek Frykowski and Abigail Folger at 10050 Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon, just a couple miles to the west of Laurel Canyon – had deep ties to the Laurel Canyon scene as well.

The Folger's with Abigail, at left

San Francisco Examiner, December 22, 1961

Exotic Abigal (Gibby) Folger (far left) was presented to San Francisco and Peninsula society last night at a magnificent Italianate ball given by her father and stepmother, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Folger, at the Hotel St. Francis.

It was for all this year's debs, their escorts and a few of the Kelhams' friends. Guests included the Folgers, the James Floods, Mr. and Mrs. James Barnett of Bel Air, Mrs. Selby McCreery, Peter McBean, Whitney Warren and Mrs. Ines Mejia Folger, who is Gibby's mother.

The dinner tables were covered with American Beauty satin cloths, and centerpieces included gold baskets filled with white camellias and garlanded gold candelabra.

Mr. and Mrs. Folger and Gibby received in the foyer beside the Colonial Room. The tall debutante's dress was a bright yellow Dior, which she purchased in Paris last summer. It was designed with an Empire bodice, three-quarter-length sleeves and a long skirt. Mrs. Folger's gown had a square-necked green sequin bodice and a white satin skirt.

Bruce Kelham was decor adviser and began with a pink and green color scheme. The receiving line was stationed in front of a trellis entwined with foliage and pink camellias. Beside it was a filigree screen with Gibby's orchid gifts.

Ernie Heckscher's Orchestra played for dancing at the opposite end of the room, the musicians flanked by 14-foot pink and green striped banners drawn up above the center of the ensemble. The little balcony boxes around the room were shaded with pink and green striped awnings.

Supper was served after midnight in the adjoining Italian Room, where the small tables were covered in dusty pink satin and the buffet in green satin.

The entrance to the room was marked with striped maypole banners. Behind the buffet were jewel-studded gilded instruments joined together with pink camellias and puffs of pink satin.

tate, folger and frykowski

As previously mentioned, victims Folger and Frykowski lived in Laurel Canyon, at 2774 Woodstock Road, in a rented home right across the road from a favored gathering spot for Laurel Canyon royalty. Many of the regular visitors to Cass Elliot's home, including a number of shady drug dealers, were also regular visitors to the Folger/Frykowski home (*Frykowski's son, by the way, was stabbed to death on June 6, 1999, thirty years after his father met the same fate*.) Victim Jay Sebring's acclaimed hair salon sat right at the mouth of Laurel Canyon, just below the Sunset Strip, and it was Sebring, alas, who was credited with sculpting Jim Morrison's famous mane. One of the investors in his Sebring International business venture was a Laurel Canyon luminary who I may have mentioned previously, Mr. John Phillips.

Sharon Tate was also well known in Laurel Canyon, where she was a frequent visitor to the homes of friends like John Phillips, Cass Elliott, and Abby Folger. And when she wasn't in Laurel Canyon, many of the canyon regulars, both famous and infamous, made themselves at home in her place on Cielo Drive. Canyonite Van Dyke Parks, for example, dropped by for a visit on the very day of the murders. And Denny Doherty, the other "*Papa*" in The Mamas and the Papas, has claimed that he and John Phillips were invited to the Cielo Drive home on the night of the murders, but, as luck would have it, they never made it over. (*Similarly, Chuck Negron of Three Dog Night, a regular visitor to the Wonderland death house, had set up a drug buy on the night of that mass murder, but he fell asleep and never made it over*.)

killer wigs

Along with the victims, the alleged killers also lived in and/or were very much a part of the Laurel Canyon scene. Bobby "*Cupid*" Beausoleil, for example, lived in a Laurel Canyon apartment during the early months of 1969. Charles "*Tex*" Watson, who allegedly

Sharon Tate

led the death squad responsible for the carnage at Cielo Drive (*above*), lived for a time in a home on – guess where? – Wonderland Avenue. During that time, curiously enough, Watson co-owned and worked in a wig shop in Beverly Hills, Crown Wig Creations, Ltd., that was located near the mouth of Benedict Canyon. Meanwhile, one of Jay Sebring's primary claims-to-fame was his expertise in crafting men's hairpieces, which he did in his shop near the mouth of Laurel Canyon. A typical day then in the late 1960s would find Watson crafting hairpieces for an upscale Hollywood clientele near Benedict Canyon, and then returning home to Laurel Canyon, while Sebring crafted hairpieces for an upscale Hollywood clientele near Laurel Canyon, and then returned home to Benedict Canyon. And then one crazy day, as we all know, one of them became a killer and the other his victim. But there's nothing odd about that, I suppose, so let's move on.

Outside Sal Mineo's Hollywood apartment, on the night of February 12th, 1976, a neighbour heard Sal calling for help and then found him in the gutter, stabbed to death at the age of 37.

He had not been robbed and a white male with long hair was seen running from the scene. His accused killer, Lionel Ray Williams was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 1979. With no apparent motive for the murder, the conviction remains controversial. Williams claims he was innocent and that homophobia impeded the search for Sal's real murderer.

He is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Hawthorne, New York. With the news that James Franco has just acquired the rights to make a biopic called "*Sal*" to be released in 2013, we're about to get a better behind the scenes look at the proud life of Sal Mineo, maybe.

I wonder what Sal thinks of all this. Looking down on us, smoking filtered Kool cigarettes and sipping his umpteenth black coffee and sugar.

He famously said in 1975, "I'll never be mistaken for Pat Boone."

jean harlow and paul bern - the clean up

Oh, wait a minute … we can't quite move on just yet, as I forgot to mention that Sebring's Benedict Canyon home, at 9820 Easton Drive, was a rather infamous Hollywood death house that had once belonged to Jean Harlow and Paul Bern. The mismatched pair were wed on July 2, 1932, when Harlow, already a huge star of the silver screen, was just twenty-one years old. Just two months later, on September 5, Bern caught a bullet to the head in his wife's bedroom. He was found sprawled naked in a pool of his own blood, his corpse drenched with his wife's perfume. Upon discovering the body, Bern's butler promptly contacted MGM's head of security, Whitey Hendry, who in turn contacted Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg. All three men descended upon the Benedict Canyon home to, you know, tidy up a bit. A couple hours later, they decided to contact the LAPD. This scene would be repeated years later when Sebring's friends would rush to the home to clean up before officers investigating the Tate murders arrived.

suicide, another suicide, another and then another, and another ...

Bern's death was, needless to say, written off as a suicide. His newlywed wife, strangely enough, was never called as a witness at the inquest. Bern's other wife – which is to say, his common-law wife, Dorothy Millette – reportedly boarded a Sacramento riverboat on September 6, 1932, the day after Paul's death. She was next seen floating belly-up in the Sacramento River. Her death, as would be expected, was also ruled a suicide. Less than five years later, Harlow herself dropped dead at the ripe old age of 26. At the time, authorities opted not to divulge the cause of death, though it was later claimed that bad kidneys had done her in. During her brief stay on this planet, Harlow had cycled through three turbulent marriages and yet still found time to serve as Godmother to Bugsy Siegel's daughter, Millicent.

Though Bern's was the most famous body to be hauled out of the Easton Drive house in a coroner's bag, it certainly wasn't the only one. Another man had reportedly committed suicide there as well, in some unspecified fashion. Yet another unfortunate soul drowned in the home's pool. And a maid was once found swinging from the end of a rope. Her death, needless to say, was ruled a suicide as well. That's a lot of blood for one home to absorb, but the house's morbid history, though a turn-off to many prospective residents, was reportedly exactly what attracted Jay Sebring to the property. His murder would further darken the black cloud hanging over the home.

sal mineo, lenny bruce, inger stevens and diane linkletter

As Laurel Canyon chronicler Michael Walker has noted, LA's two most notorious mass murders, one in August of 1969 and the other in July of 1981 (*both involving five victims, though at Wonderland one of the five miraculously survived*), provided rather morbid bookends for Laurel Canyon's glory years. Walker though, like others who have chronicled that time and place, treats these brutal crimes as though they were unfortunate aberrations. The reality, however, is that the nine bodies recovered from Cielo Drive and Wonderland Avenue constitute just the tip of a very large, and very bloody, iceberg. To partially illustrate that point, here is today's second trivia question: what do Diane Linkletter (*daughter of famed entertainer Art Linkletter*), legendary comedian Lenny Bruce, screen idol Sal Mineo, starlet Inger Stevens, and silent film star Ramon Novarro, all have in common?

If you answered that all were found dead in their homes, either in or at the mouth of Laurel Canyon, in the decade between 1966 and 1976, then award yourself five points. If you added that all five were, in all likelihood, murdered in their Laurel Canyon homes, then add five bonus points.

Only two of them, of course, are officially listed as murder victims (*Mineo, who was stabbed to death outside his home at 8563 Holloway Drive on February 12, 1976, and Novarro, who was killed near the Country Store in a decidedly ritualistic fashion on the eve of Halloween, 1968*). Inger Steven's death in her home at 8000 Woodrow Wilson Drive, on April 30, 1970 (*Walpurgisnacht on the occult calendar*), was officially a suicide, though why she opted to propel herself through a decorative glass screen as part of that suicide remains a mystery. Perhaps she just wanted to leave behind a gruesome crime scene, and simple overdoses can be so, you know, bloodless and boring.

i can fly!

Diane Linkletter, as we all know, sailed out the window of her Shoreham Towers apartment because, in her LSD-addled state, she thought she could fly, or some such thing. We know this because Art himself told us that it was so, and because the story was retold throughout the 1970s as a cautionary tale about the dangers of drugs. What we weren't told, however, is that Diane (*born, curiously enough, on Halloween day, 1948*) wasn't alone when she plunged six stories to her death on the morning of October 4, 1969. Au contraire, she was with a gent by the name of Edward Durston, who, in a completely unexpected turn of events, accompanied actress Carol Wayne to Mexico some 15 years later. Carol, alas, perhaps weighed down by her enormous breasts, managed to drown in barely a foot of water, while Mr. Durston promptly disappeared. As would be expected, he was never questioned by authorities about Wayne's curious death. After all, it is quite common for the same guy to be the sole witness to two separate '*accidental*' deaths.

Abigail Folger • August 10, 1969 - Coroners Photo

Art also neglected to mention, by the way, that just weeks before Diane's curious death, another member of the Linkletter clan, Art's son-in-law, John Zwyer, caught a bullet to the head in the backyard of his Hollywood Hills home. But that, of course, was an unconnected, uhmm, suicide, so don't go thinking otherwise.

I'm not even going to discuss here the circumstances of Bruce's death from acute morphine poisoning on August 3, 1966, because, to be perfectly honest, I don't know too many people who don't already assume that Lenny was whacked. I'll just note here that his funeral was well-attended by the Laurel Canyon rock icons, and control over his unreleased material fell into the hands of a guy by the name of Frank Zappa. And another rather unsavory character named Phil Spector, whose crack team of studio musicians, dubbed The Wrecking Crew, were the actual musicians playing on many studio recordings by such bands as The Monkees, The Byrds, The Beach Boys, and The Mamas and the Papas.

(*As for the trivia question, the person being praised, of course, was our old friend Chuck Manson. And the guy singing his praises was Mr. Neil Young.*)

Dead Bodies Start Piling Up

The
Laurel Canyon
Death List

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

7097-034663

DECEDENT PERSONAL DATA 6

1a. NAME OF DECEASED—FIRST NAME: ABIGAIL
1b. MIDDLE NAME: A.
1c. LAST NAME: FOLGER
2a. DATE OF DEATH: August 9, 1969
2b. HOUR: found 9:10 a.m.
3. SEX: Female
4. COLOR OR RACE: Caucasian
5. BIRTHPLACE: California
6. DATE OF BIRTH: August 11, 1943
7. AGE: 25
8. NAME AND BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER: Peter Folger - California
9. MAIDEN NAME AND BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER: Inez Mejia - California
10. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY: USA
11. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: 553-68-4062
12. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (SPECIFY): Never Married
13. NAME OF SURVIVING SPOUSE
14. LAST OCCUPATION: Worker Social & Volunteer
15. NUMBER OF YEARS IN THIS OCCUPATION: 5
16. NAME OF LAST EMPLOYING COMPANY OR FIRM: None
17. KIND OF INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS: Social Work

AMENDED 1 of 2

PLACE OF DEATH

18a. PLACE OF DEATH—NAME OF HOSPITAL OR OTHER IN-PATIENT FACILITY
18b. STREET ADDRESS: 10050 Cielo Drive
18c. INSIDE CITY CORPORATE LIMITS: Yes
18d. CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles
18e. COUNTY: Los Angeles
18f. LENGTH OF STAY IN COUNTY OF DEATH: 6 Months
18g. LENGTH OF STAY IN CALIFORNIA: Life

USUAL RESIDENCE

19a. USUAL RESIDENCE—STREET ADDRESS: 1750 Taylor Street
19b. INSIDE CITY CORPORATE LIMITS: Yes
19c. CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco
19d. COUNTY: San Francisco
19e. STATE: California
20. NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF INFORMANT: Peter Folger, 3860 Woodside Road, Woodside, California

PHYSICIAN'S OR CORONER'S CERTIFICATION

21a. CORONER
21b. PHYSICIAN
21c. PHYSICIAN OR CORONER: Coroner, Deputy
21d. DATE SIGNED: 8-12-69
21e. ADDRESS: Hall of Justice, Los Angeles
Investigation

FUNERAL DIRECTOR AND LOCAL REGISTRAR

22a. SPECIFY BURIAL, ENTOMBMENT OR CREMATION: Entombment
22b. DATE: 8-13-69
23. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: Holy Cross Cemetery-Colma
24. EMBALMER—SIGNATURE OF EMBALMER: LICENSE NUMBER: 3455
25. NAME OF FUNERAL DIRECTOR: Crippen & Flynn Mortuary
26. IF CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT WAS FILED, DATE DEATH REPORTED TO CORONER
27. LOCAL REGISTRAR—SIGNATURE
28. DATE ACCEPTED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR: AUG 12 1969

MEDICAL AND HEALTH DATA

29. PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY: ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR A, B, AND C
(A) IMMEDIATE CAUSE: STAB WOUND OF AORTA
(B) DUE TO, OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF
(C) DUE TO, OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF
CONDITIONS, IF ANY, WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE (A), STATING THE UNDERLYING CAUSE LAST.
APPROXIMATE INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH

9 CAUSE OF DEATH

30. PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS—CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE GIVEN IN PART I.
31. WAS OPERATION IN SHORT PERFORMED FOR ANY CONDITION IN ITEMS 29 OR 30? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): No
32a. AUTOPSY? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
32b. IF YES, WERE FINDINGS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING CAUSE OF DEATH? (SPECIFY YES OR NO)

INJURY INFORMATION

33. SPECIFY ACCIDENT, SUICIDE OR HOMICIDE
34. PLACE OF INJURY (SPECIFY HOME, FARM, FACTORY, PUBLIC HIGHWAY, STREET)
35. INJURY AT WORK (SPECIFY YES OR NO)
36a. DATE OF INJURY
36b. HOUR
37a. PLACE OF INJURY (STREET AND NUMBER OR LOCATION AND CITY OR TOWN)
37b. DISTANCE FROM PLACE OF INJURY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCE (FOR W)
38. WERE LABORATORY TESTS DONE FOR DRUGS OR TOXIC CHEMICALS? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
39. WERE LABORATORY TESTS DONE FOR ALCOHOL? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
40. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED

STATE REGISTRAR

A. B. C. D. E. F. X

Rev. 1 7-68 Form VS-11

Wonderland Crime Scene Coroners Photo

Voytek Wounds Coroners Photo

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

1097-015556

DECEDENT PERSONAL DATA

1a. NAME OF DECEASED: WOJCIECH
1b. MIDDLE NAME
1c. LAST NAME: FRYKOWSKI
2a. DATE OF DEATH: August 9, 1969
2b. HOUR: Found 9:10 A.M.
3. SEX: Male
4. COLOR OR RACE: Caucasian
5. BIRTHPLACE: Poland
6. DATE OF BIRTH: December 22, 1936
7. AGE: 33 YEARS
8. NAME AND BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER: Jan Frykowski-Poland
9. MAIDEN NAME AND BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER: Teofila Stefanowska-Poland
10. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY: U.S.A.
11. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: None
12. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (SPECIFY): Divorced
13. NAME OF SURVIVING SPOUSE
14. LAST OCCUPATION: Writer
15. NUMBER OF YEARS IN THIS OCCUPATION: 10
16. NAME OF LAST EMPLOYING COMPANY OR FIRM: Self Employed
17. KIND OF INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS: Writer

AMENDED 1 of 2

PLACE OF DEATH

18a. PLACE OF DEATH—NAME OF HOSPITAL OR OTHER IN-PATIENT FACILITY: None
18b. STREET ADDRESS: 10050 CIELO DR
18c. INSIDE CITY CORPORATE LIMITS: YES
18d. CITY OR TOWN: LOS ANGELES
18e. COUNTY: LOS ANGELES
18f. LENGTH OF STAY IN COUNTY OF DEATH: 1 YEARS
18g. LENGTH OF STAY IN CALIFORNIA: 1 YEARS

USUAL RESIDENCE

19a. USUAL RESIDENCE—STREET ADDRESS: 2774 Woodstock Road
19b. INSIDE CITY CORPORATE LIMITS: yes
19c. CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles
19d. COUNTY: Los Angeles
19e. STATE: California
20. NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF INFORMANT: Teofila Frykowska, 1754 State St., South Pasadena

PHYSICIAN'S OR CORONER'S CERTIFICATION

21a. CORONER
21b. PHYSICIAN
21c. PHYSICIAN OR CORONER
21d. DATE SIGNED: 8-21-69
21e. ADDRESS: Hall of Justice, Los Angeles
Investigation

FUNERAL DIRECTOR AND LOCAL REGISTRAR

22a. SPECIFY BURIAL, ENTOMBMENT OR CREMATION: Cremation
22b. DATE: 8-22-69
23. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY: St. Josef Cemetery-Lodz, Poland
24. EMBALMER—SIGNATURE OF EMBALMER: LICENSE NUMBER: 5574
25. NAME OF FUNERAL DIRECTOR: FOREST LAWN MEMORIAL-PARK ASS'N. GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA
26. IF CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT WAS FILED, DATE DEATH REPORTED TO CORONER
27. LOCAL REGISTRAR—SIGNATURE
28. DATE ACCEPTED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR: AUG 21 1969

MEDICAL AND HEALTH DATA

29. PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY: ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR A, B, AND C
(A) IMMEDIATE CAUSE: Multiple stab wounds of body causing massive hemorrhage.
(B) DUE TO, OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF
(C)
CONDITIONS, IF ANY, WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE (A), STATING THE UNDERLYING CAUSE LAST.
APPROXIMATE INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH

9 CAUSE OF DEATH

30. PART II. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS—CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RELATED TO THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE GIVEN IN PART I.
31. WAS OPERATION IN SHORT PERFORMED FOR ANY CONDITION IN ITEMS 29 OR 30? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): No
32a. AUTOPSY? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
32b. IF YES, WERE FINDINGS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING CAUSE OF DEATH? (SPECIFY YES OR NO)

INJURY INFORMATION

33. SPECIFY ACCIDENT, SUICIDE OR HOMICIDE
34. PLACE OF INJURY (SPECIFY HOME, FARM, FACTORY, PUBLIC HIGHWAY, STREET)
35. INJURY AT WORK (SPECIFY YES OR NO)
36a. DATE OF INJURY
36b. HOUR
37a. PLACE OF INJURY (STREET AND NUMBER OR LOCATION AND CITY OR TOWN)
37b. DISTANCE FROM PLACE OF INJURY TO PERMANENT RESIDENCE (FOR W)
38. WERE LABORATORY TESTS DONE FOR DRUGS OR TOXIC CHEMICALS? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
39. WERE LABORATORY TESTS DONE FOR ALCOHOL? (SPECIFY YES OR NO): Yes
40. DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED

STATE REGISTRAR

A. B. C. D. E. F. 1941

ORIG MANCHURIAN
CANDIDATE
SAT & SUN 7PM

"*I mean, fuck, he auditioned for Neil [Young] for fuck's sake*."

Graham Nash, explaining to author Michael Walker
how close Charlie Manson was to the Laurel Canyon scene

During the ten-year period during which Bruce, Novarro, Mineo, Linkletter, Stevens, Tate, Sebring, Frykowski and Folger all turned up dead, a whole lot of other people connected to Laurel Canyon did as well, often under very questionable circumstances. The list includes, but is certainly not limited to, all of the following names:

• Marina Elizabeth Habe, whose body was carved up and tossed into the heavy brush along Mulholland Drive, just west of Bowmont Drive, on December 30, 1968. Habe, just seventeen at the time of her death, was the daughter of Hans Habe, who emigrated to the U.S. from fascist Austria circa 1940. Shortly thereafter, he married a General Foods heiress and began studying psychological warfare at the Military Intelligence Training Center. After completing his training, he put his psychological warfare skills to use by creating 18 newspapers in occupied Germany – under the direction, no doubt, of the OSS.

• Christine Hinton, who was killed in a head-on collision on September 30, 1969. At the time, Hinton was a girlfriend of David Crosby and the founder and head of The Byrd's fan club. She was also the daughter of a career Army officer stationed at the notorious Presidio military base in San Francisco. Another of Crosby's girlfriends from that same era was Shelley Roecker, who grew up on the Hamilton Air Force Base in Marin County.

• Jane Doe #59, found dumped into the heavy undergrowth of Laurel Canyon in November 1969, within sight of where Habe had been dumped less than a year earlier. The teenage girl, who was never identified, had been stabbed 157 times in the chest and throat.

• Alan "Blind Owl" Wilson, singer, songwriter and guitarist for the Laurel Canyon blues-rock band, Canned Heat, was found dead in his Topanga Canyon home on September 3, 1970. His death was written off as a suicide/OD. Wilson had moved to Topanga Canyon after the band's Laurel Canyon home – on Lookout Mountain Avenue, next door to Joni Mitchell and Graham Nash's home – burned to the ground. "Blind Owl" was just twenty-seven years old at the time of his death. A little more than a decade later, Wilson's former bandmate, Bob "The Bear" Hite, who had once acknowledged in an interview that he had partied in the canyons with various members of the Manson Family, died of a heart attack at the ripe old age of 36.

• Jimi Hendrix, who reportedly briefly occupied the sprawling mansion just north of the Log Cabin after he moved to LA in 1968, died in London under seriously questionable circumstances on September 18, 1970. Though he rarely spoke of it, Jimi had served a stint in the U.S. Army with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell. His official records indicate that he was forced into the service by the courts and then released after just one year when he purportedly proved to be a poor soldier. One wonders though why he was assigned to such an elite division if he was indeed such a failure. One also wonders why he wasn't subjected to disciplinary measures rather than being handed a free pass out of his ostensibly court-ordered service. In any event, Jimi himself once told reporters that he was given a medical discharge after breaking an ankle during a parachute jump. And one biographer has claimed that Jimi faked being gay to earn an early release. The truth, alas, remains rather elusive. At the time of Jimi's death, the first person called by his girlfriend – Monika Danneman, who was the last to see Hendrix alive – was Eric Burden of the Animals. Two years earlier, Burden had relocated to LA and taken over ringmaster duties from Frank Zappa after Zappa had vacated the Log Cabin and moved into a less high-profile Laurel Canyon home. Within a year of Jimi's death, an underage prostitute named...

• Devon Wilson who had been with Jimi the day before his death, plunged from an eighth-floor window of New York's Chelsea Hotel. On March 5, 1973, a shadowy character named...

• Michael Jeffery, who had managed both Hendrix and Burden, was killed in a mid-air plane collision. Jeffery was known to openly boast of having organized crime connections and of working for the CIA. After Jimi's death, it was discovered that Jeffery had been funneling most of Hendrix's gross earnings into offshore accounts in the Bahamas linked to international drug trafficking. Years later, on April 5, 1996...

• Monika Danneman, the daughter of a wealthy German industrialist, was found dead near her home in a fume-filled Mercedes.

• Jim Morrison, who for a time lived in a home on Rothdell Trail, behind the Laurel Canyon Country Store, may or may not have died in Paris on July 3, 1971. The events of that day remain shrouded in mystery and rumor, and the details of the story, such as they are, have changed over the years. What is known is that, on that very same day, Admiral George Stephen Morrison delivered the keynote speech at a decommissioning ceremony for the aircraft carrier USS Bon Homme Richard, from where, seven years earlier, he had helped choreograph the Tonkin Gulf Incident. A few years after Jim's death, his common-law wife, Pamela Courson, dropped dead as well, officially of a heroin overdose. Like Hendrix, Morrison had been an avid student of the occult, with a particular fondness for the work of Aleister Crowley. According to super-groupie Pamela DesBarres, he had also "read all he could about incest and sadism." Also like Hendrix, Morrison was just twenty-seven at the time of his (possible) death.

• Brandon DeWilde, a good friend of David Crosby and Gram Parsons, was killed in a freak accident in Colorado on July 6, 1972, when his van plowed under a flatbed truck. In the 1950s, DeWilde had been an in-demand child actor since the age of eight. He had appeared on screen with some of the biggest names in Hollywood, including Alan Ladd, Lee Marvin, Paul Newman, John Wayne, Kirk Douglas and Henry Fonda. Around 1965, DeWilde fell in with Hollywood's '*Young Turks*,' through whom he met and befriended Crosby, Parsons, and various other members of the Laurel Canyon Club. DeWilde was just thirty at the time of his death.

• Christine Frka, a former governess for Moon Unit Zappa and the Zappa family's former housekeeper at the Log Cabin, died on November 5, 1972 of an alleged drug overdose, though friends suspected foul play. As "Miss Christine," Frka had been a member of the Zappa-created GTOs, a musical act, of sorts, composed entirely of very young groupies. She was also the inspiration for the song, "Christine's Tune: Devil in Disguise" by Gram Parson's Flying Burrito Brothers. Frka was probably in her early twenties when she died, possibly even younger.

• Danny Whitten, a guitarist/vocalist/songwriter with Neil Young's sometime band, Crazy Horse, died of an overdose on November 18, 1972. According to rock 'n' roll legend, Whitten had been fired by Young earlier that day during rehearsals in San Francisco. Young and Jack Nietzsche, Phil Spector's former top assistant, had given Whitten $50 and put him on a plane back to LA. Within hours, he was dead. Whitten was just twenty-nine.

• Bruce Berry, a roadie for Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, died of a heroin overdose in June 1973. Berry had just flown out to Maui to deliver a shipment of cocaine to Stephen Stills, and was promptly sent back to LA by Crosby and Nash. Berry was a brother of Jan Berry, of Jan and Dean. (*Dean Torrence, the "Dean" of Jan and Dean, had played a part in the fake kidnapping of Frank Sinatra, Jr., just after the JFK assassination. The staged event was a particularly lame effort to divert attention away from the questions that were cropping up, after the initial shock had passed, about the events in Dealey Plaza*.)

• Clarence White, a guitarist who had played with The Byrds, was run over by a drunk driver and killed on July 14, 1973. White had grown up near Lancaster, not far from where Frank Zappa spent his teen years. At least one member of White's immediate family was employed at Edwards Air Force Base. The driver who killed young Clarence, just twenty-nine years old at the time of his death, was given a one-year suspended sentence and served no time.

• Gram Parsons, formerly with the International Submarine Band, The Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers, allegedly overdosed on a speedball at the Joshua Tree Inn on September 19, 1973. Just two months before his death, Parson's Topanga Canyon home had burnt to the ground. After his death, his body was stolen from LAX by the Burrito's road manager, Phil Kaufman, and then taken back out to Joshua Tree and ritually burned on the autumnal equinox (*Kaufman had been a prison buddy of Charlie Manson's at Terminal Island; when Phil was released from Terminal Island in March of 1968, he quickly reunited with his old pal, who had been released a year earlier.*)

By the time of Gram's death, his family had already experienced its share of

questionable deaths. Just before Christmas, 1958, Parson's father had sent Gram, along with his mother and sister, off to stay with family in Florida. The next day, just after the winter solstice...

• "*Coon Dog*" Parsons caught a bullet to the head. His death was recorded as a suicide and it was claimed that he had sent his family away to spare them as much pain as possible. It seems just as likely, however, that "*Coon Dog*" knew his days were numbered and wanted to get his family out of the line of fire. The next year, 1959, Gram's mother married again, to Robert Ellis Parsons, who adopted Gram and his sister Avis. Six years later, in June of 1965...

• Gram's mother died the day after a sudden illness landed her in the hospital. According to witnesses, she died "*almost immediately*" after a visit from her husband, Robert Parsons. Many of those close to the situation believed that Parsons had a hand in her death (*very shortly thereafter, Robert Parsons married his stepdaughter's teenage babysitter*). Following his mother's death, Parsons briefly attended Harvard University, and then launched his music career with the formation of the International Submarine Band, which quickly found its way to – where else? – Laurel Canyon. Gram's death in 1973 at the age of 26 left his younger sister Avis as the sole surviving member of the family. She was killed in 1993, reportedly in a boating accident, at the age of 43.

• "*Mama*" Cass Elliot, the "*Earth Mother*" of Laurel Canyon whose circle of friends included musicians, Mansonites, young Hollywood stars, the wealthy son of a State Department official, singer/songwriters, assorted drug dealers, and some particularly unsavory characters the LAPD once described as "*some kind of hit squad*," died in the London home of Harry Nilsson on July 29, 1974 (*Nilsson had been a frequent drinking buddy of John Lennon in Laurel Canyon and on the Sunset Strip*). At thirty-two, Cass had lived a long and productive life, by Laurel Canyon standards. Four years later, in the very same room of the very same London flat, still owned by Harry Nilsson...

• Keith Moon of The Who also died at thirty-two (*on September 7, 1978*). Though initial press reports held that Cass had choked to death on a ham sandwich, the official cause of death was listed as heart failure. Her actual cause of death could likely be filed under "*knowing where too many of the bodies were buried.*" Moon reportedly died from a massive overdose of a drug used to treat alcohol withdrawal. Like Cass, Moon had at one time been a resident of Laurel Canyon.

• Amy Gossage, Graham Nash's girlfriend at the time, was murdered in her San Francisco home on February 13, 1975. Just twenty years old at the time, she had been stabbed nearly fifty times and was bludgeoned beyond recognition. Amy's father, a famed advertising/PR executive, had died of leukemia in 1969. Not long after, her half-sister had been killed in a car crash. In May of 1974, her mother, the daughter of a wealthy banking family, died as well, reportedly of cirrhosis of the liver. That left just Amy, age 19, and her brother Eben, age 20, both of whom reportedly had serious drug dependencies. Amy's brutal murder, cleverly enough, was pinned on Eben. Police had conveniently found bloodstained clothes, along with a hammer and scissors, sitting on the porch of Eben's apartment, looking very much as though it had been planted. A friend of Eben's would later remark, perhaps quite tellingly, "*If Eben did kill her, I'm convinced he doesn't know he did it.*"

• Tim Buckley, a singer/songwriter signed to Frank Zappa's record label and managed by Herb Cohen, died of a reported overdose on June 29, 1975. Buckley had once appeared on an episode of The Monkees, and, like Monkee Peter Tork (*and so many others in this story*), he hailed from Washington, DC. Buckley was just twenty-eight at the time of his death. His son...

• Jeff Buckley, also an accomplished musician, managed to remain on this planet two years longer than his dad did; he was thirty when he died in a bizarre drowning incident on May 29, 1997.

• Phyllis Major Browne, wife of singer/songwriter Jackson Browne, reportedly overdosed on barbiturates on March 25, 1976. Her death was – you all should know the words to this song by now – ruled a suicide. She was just thirty years old.

There are a few other curious deaths we could add here as well, though they were only indirectly related to the Laurel Canyon scene. Nevertheless, they deserve an honorable mention, especially the Bobby Fuller and Phil Ochs entries; the former because it is a rather extraordinary example of the exemplary work done by the LAPD, and the latter because it just may contain a key to understanding the Laurel Canyon phenomenon:

• Bobby Fuller, singer/songwriter/guitarist for the Bobby Fuller Four, was found dead in his car near Grauman's Chinese Theater on July 18, 1966, after being lured away from his home by a mysterious 2:00-3:00 AM phone call of unknown origin. Fuller is best known for penning the hit song "*I Fought the Law*," which had just hit the charts when he supposedly committed suicide at the age of twenty-three. There were multiple cuts and bruises on his face, chest and shoulders, dried blood around his mouth, and a hairline fracture to his right hand. He had been thoroughly doused with gasoline, including in his mouth and throat. The inside of the car was doused as well, and an open book of matches lay on the seat. It was perfectly obvious that Fuller's killer (*or killers*) had planned to torch the car, destroying all evidence, but likely got scared away. The LAPD, nevertheless, ruled Fuller's death a suicide – despite the coroner's conclusion that the gas had been poured after Bobby's death. Police later decided that it wasn't a suicide after all, but rather an accident. They didn't bother to explain how Fuller had accidentally doused himself with gasoline after accidentally killing himself. At the time of his death, one of Fuller's closest confidants was a prostitute named Melody who worked at PJ's nightclub, where Bobby frequently played. The club was co-owned by Eddie Nash, who would, many years later, orchestrate the Wonderland massacre. A few years after Bobby's death, his brother and bass player, Randy Fuller, teamed up with drummer Dewey Martin, formerly of Buffalo Springfield.

• Gary Hinman, a musician, music teacher, and part-time chemist, was brutally murdered in his Topanga Canyon home on July 27, 1969. Convicted of his murder was Mansonite Bobby Beausoleil, who had played rhythm guitar in a local band known as the Grass Roots. To avoid confusion with the more famous band already using that name, the Laurel Canyon band changed its name to Love. Beausoleil would claim that the band's new name was inspired by his own nickname, Cupid.

• Janis Joplin, vocalist extraordinaire, was found dead of a heroin overdose on October 4, 1970 at the Landmark Hotel, about a mile east of the mouth of Laurel Canyon, where she occasionally visited. Indications were that she had taken or been given a "*hot shot*," many times stronger than standard street heroin. Joplin's father, by the way, was a petroleum engineer for Texaco. And though it might normally seem an odd coupling, it somehow seems perfectly natural, in the context of this story, that Janis once dated that great crusader in the war on all things immoral, William Bennett. Like Morrison and Hendrix, Joplin died at the age of twenty-seven.

• Duane Allman and Berry Oakley, lead guitarist and bass player for the Allman Brothers, were killed in freakishly similar motorcycle crashes on October 29, 1971 and November 11, 1972. Allman was the son of Willis Allman, a US Army Sergeant who had been murdered by another soldier near Norfolk, Virginia (*home of the world's largest naval installation*) on December 26, 1949. In 1967, Duane and his younger brother, Gregg, then billing themselves as The Allman Joys, ventured out to Los Angeles. While there, Gregg auditioned for and was almost signed by the Laurel Canyon band Poco, which featured Buffalo Springfield alumni Richie Furay and Jim Messina, as well as future Eagle Randy Meisner. Duane was killed when a truck turned in front of his motorcycle at an intersection and inexplicably stopped. Just over a year later, Oakley had a similar run-in with a bus, just three blocks from where Allman had been killed. Following the crash, Berry had dusted himself off and declined medical attention, insisting that he was okay. Three hours later, he was rushed to the hospital, where he died. Both Oakley and Allman were just twenty-four years old.

• Phil Ochs, folk singer/songwriter and political activist, was found hanged in his sister's home in Far Rockaway, New York on April 9, 1976. Throughout his life, Ochs was one of the most overtly political of the 1960s rock and folk music stars. A regular attendee at anti-war, civil rights, and labor rallies, Ochs appeared to be, at all times, an unwavering political leftist (*he named his first band The Singing Socialists*).

swinging from the end of a rope

That all changed, however, and rather dramatically, in the months before his death. Born in El Paso, Texas on December 19, 1940, Phil and his family moved frequently during the first few years of his life. His father, Dr.

Jacob Ochs, had been drafted by the US Army and assigned to various military hospitals in New York, New Mexico and Texas. In 1943, Dr. Ochs was shipped overseas, returning two years later with a medical discharge. Upon his return, he was immediately institutionalized and didn't return to his family for another two years. During that time, he was subjected to every '*treatment' imaginable, including electroshock 'therapy.*' When he finally returned to his family, in 1947, he was but a shell of his former self, described by Phil's sister as "*almost like a phantom*." Beginning in the fall of 1956, Phil Ochs began attending Staunton Military Academy, the very same institution that future '*serial killer*' cult leader Gary Heidnik would attend just one year after Ochs graduated. During Phil's two years there, a friend and fellow band member was found swinging from the end of a rope (*I probably don't need to add here that the death was ruled a suicide*).

Following graduation, Phil enrolled at Ohio State University, but not before, oddly enough, having a little plastic surgery done to alter his appearance (*doing such things, needless to say, was rather uncommon in 1958*). In early 1962, just months before his scheduled graduation, Ochs dropped out of college to pursue a career in music. By 1966, he had released three albums. In 1967, under the management of his brother, Michael Ochs, Phil moved out to Los Angeles. Michael had begun working the previous year as an assistant to Barry James, who maintained a party house at 8504 Ridpath in Laurel Canyon. In the early 1970s, with his career beginning to fade, Phil Ochs began to travel internationally, usually accompanied by vast quantities of booze and pills. Those travels included a visit to Chile, not long before the US-sponsored coup that toppled Salvador Allende.

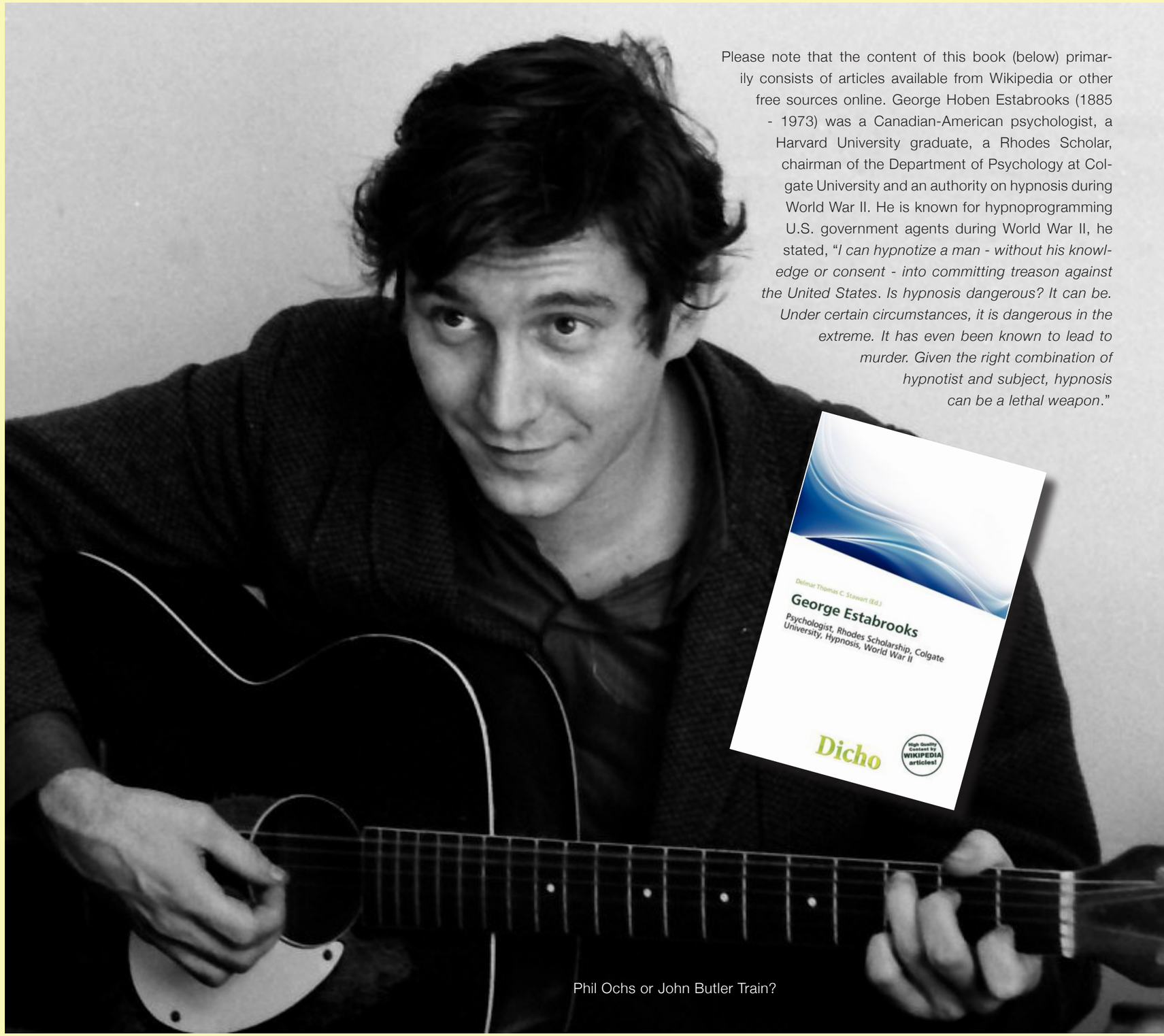
i am the cia

In early summer of 1975, Phil Ochs' public persona abruptly changed. Using the name John Butler Train, Ochs proclaimed himself to be a CIA operative and presented himself as a belligerent, right-wing thug. He told an interviewer that, "*on the first day of summer 1975, Phil Ochs was murdered in the Chelsea Hotel by John Train ... For the good of societies, public and secret, he needed to be gotten rid of.*" That symbolic assassination, on the summer solstice, took place at the same hotel that Devon Wilson had flown out of a few years earlier. One of Ochs' biographers would later write that Phil/John "*actually believed he was a member of the CIA*." Also in those final months of his life, Ochs began compiling curious lists, with entries that clearly were references to US biological warfare research: "*shellfish toxin, Fort Dietrich, cobra venom, Chantilly Race Track, hollow silver dollars, New York Cornell Hospital ...*"

dr. estabrooks

Many years before Ochs' metamorphosis, in an interesting bit of foreshadowing, psychological warfare operative George Estabrooks explained how US intelligence agencies could create the perfect spy:

"*We start with an excellent subject ... we need a man or woman who is*



Please note that the content of this book (below) primarily consists of articles available from Wikipedia or other free sources online. George Hoben Estabrooks (1885 - 1973) was a Canadian-American psychologist, a Harvard University graduate, a Rhodes Scholar, chairman of the Department of Psychology at Colgate University and an authority on hypnosis during World War II. He is known for hypnoprogramming U.S. government agents during World War II, he stated, "*I can hypnotize a man - without his knowledge or consent - into committing treason against the United States. Is hypnosis dangerous? It can be. Under certain circumstances, it is dangerous in the extreme. It has even been known to lead to murder. Given the right combination of hypnotist and subject, hypnosis can be a lethal weapon.*"

Phil Ochs or John Butler Train?

highly intelligent and physically tough. Then we start to develop a case of multiple personality through hypnotism. In his normal waking state, which we will call Personality A, or PA, this individual will become a rabid communist. He will join the party, follow the party line and make himself as objectionable as possible to the authorities. Note that he will be acting in good faith. He is a communist, or rather his PA is a communist and will behave as such. Then we develop Personality B (PB), the secondary personality, the unconscious personality, if you wish, although this is somewhat of a contradiction in terms. This personality is rabidly American and anti-communist. It has all the information possessed by PA, the normal personality, whereas PA does not have this advantage ... My super spy plays his role as a communist in his waking state, aggressively, consistently, fearlessly. But his PB is a loyal American, and PB has all the memories of PA. As a loyal American, he will not hesitate to divulge those memories."

programmed to kill

Estabrooks never explained what would happen if the programming were to go haywire and Personality B were to become the conscious personality, but my guess is that such a person would be considered a severe liability and would be treated accordingly. They might even be find themselves swinging from the end of a rope. Phil Ochs was thirty-five at the time of his death.

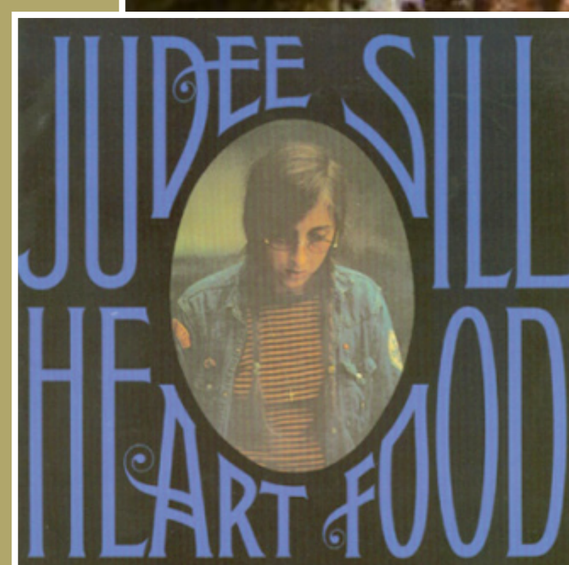
end of the laurel canyon death list? umm, no...

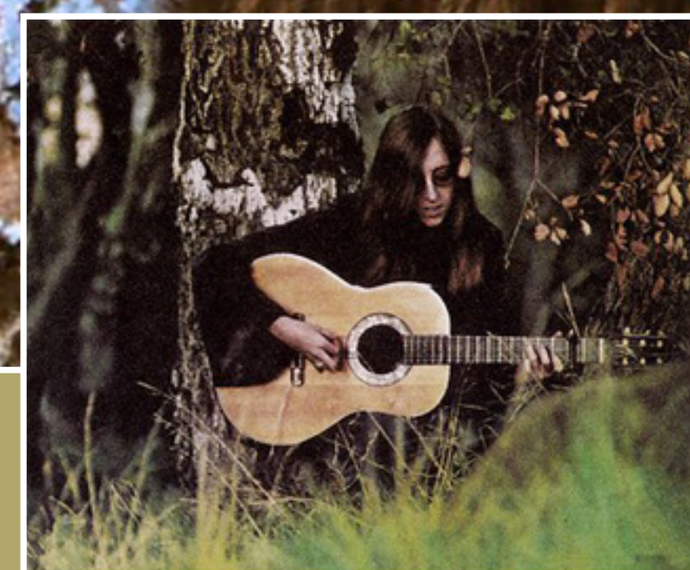
And with that, I think we can move on now from the Laurel Canyon Death List. The list is not yet complete, mind you, since we have only covered the years 1966-1976. Rest assured then that we will continue to add names as we follow the various threads of this story. Some of those names will be quite familiar, while others will be significantly less so. One of the names from that era that has been all but forgotten is Judee Lynn Sill, who was once favorably compared to such other Laurel Canyon singer/songwriters as Joni Mitchell, Judi Collins and Carole King. By the time of her death on November 23, 1979, however, she had been all but forgotten, and not a single obituary was published to note her passing.

Judee Lynn Sill was born in Studio City, California, not far from the northern entrance to Laurel Canyon, on October 7, 1944. Her father, Milford "Bud" Sill, was reportedly a cameraman for Paramount Studios with numerous Hollywood connections. When Judee was quite young, however, Bud moved the family to Oakland and opened a bar known as "*Bud's Bar*." He also operated a side business as an importer of rare animals, which required him to spend a considerable amount of time traveling in Central and South America. Such a business, it should be noted, would provide an ideal cover for covert intelligence work. In any event...

• Bud Sill was dead by 1952, when Judee was just seven or eight years old. Depending on who is telling the story, Bud died either from pneumonia or a heart attack. Following Bud's death, the family relocated back to Southern California and Judee's older brother Dennis, still in his teens, took over the family importing business. That didn't last long though as...

• Dennis Sill soon turned up dead down in Central America, either from a liver infection or a car accident. The animal importing business, I guess, is a rather dangerous one. Judee's mother, Oneta, met and married Ken Muse, an Academy Award winning animator for Hanna-Barbera who was described by Judee as an abusive, violent alcoholic. At fifteen, Judee fled her violent home life and lived with an older man with whom she pulled off a series of armed robberies in the San Fernando Valley. Those activities landed her in reform school, which did little to curb her appetite for drugs, crime and alcohol. She spent the next few years with a serious heroin addiction, which she financed by dealing drugs and turning tricks in some of LA's seedier neighborhoods.





By 1963, Judee had cleaned herself up enough to enroll in junior college. In the early winter of 1965, however, Judee's mom, her last surviving family member, died either of cancer or of complications arising from her chronic alcoholism (take your pick; the details of this story will likely remain forever elusive). Barely an adult, Judee was left all alone in the world, and thus began another downward spiral into drugs and crime, which culminated in her being arrested and possibly serving time on forgery and drug charges.

In the late 1960s, with her addictions apparently temporarily curbed, Sill joined the Laurel Canyon scene, where she attempted to forge a career as a singer/songwriter. Her first big break came when she sold the song "*Lady O*" to The Turtles (*yet another Laurel Canyon band to hit it big in the mid-1960s; best known for the hit single "Happy Together," The Turtles were led by lead vocalist/songwriter Howard Kaylan, who happened to be, small world that it is, a cousin of Frank Zappa's manager and business partner, Herb Cohen*). The band released the song, which featured Judee's guitar work, in 1969. The next year, Sill became the first artist signed to David Geffen's fledgling Asylum record label. The year after that, her self-titled debut album became Asylum's first official release. The first single from the album, "*Jesus Was a Crossmaker,*" was produced by Graham Nash, whom she opened for on tour following the album's release.

Though critically well-received, the album's sales were disappointing, in part because the record was overshadowed by the debut albums of Jackson Browne and The Eagles, both released by Asylum shortly after the release of Judee's album. Sill's second album, 1973's "*Heart Food*," was even more of a commercial disappointment. Nevertheless, in 1974 she began work on a third album in Monkee Mike Nesmith's recording studio. Prior to completion, however...

• Judee Lynn Sill abandoned the project and promptly disappeared without a trace. What became of her between that time and her death some five years later remains largely a mystery. It is assumed that she once again descended into a life of drugs and prostitution, but no one seems to know for sure.

It is alleged that she was seriously injured when her car was rear-ended by actor Danny Kaye, causing her to suffer from chronic back pain thereafter, thus contributing to her drug addictions. According to a friend of hers, she lived in a home that featured an enormous photo of Bela Lugosi above the fireplace, a large ebony cross above her bed, and racks of candles. She is said to have read extensively from Rosicrucian manuscripts and from the writings of Aleister Crowley, to have possessed a complete collection of the work of Helena Blavatsky, and to have been a gifted tarot card reader.

What is known for sure is that, on the day after Thanksgiving, 1979, Judee Sill, the last surviving member of her family, was found dead

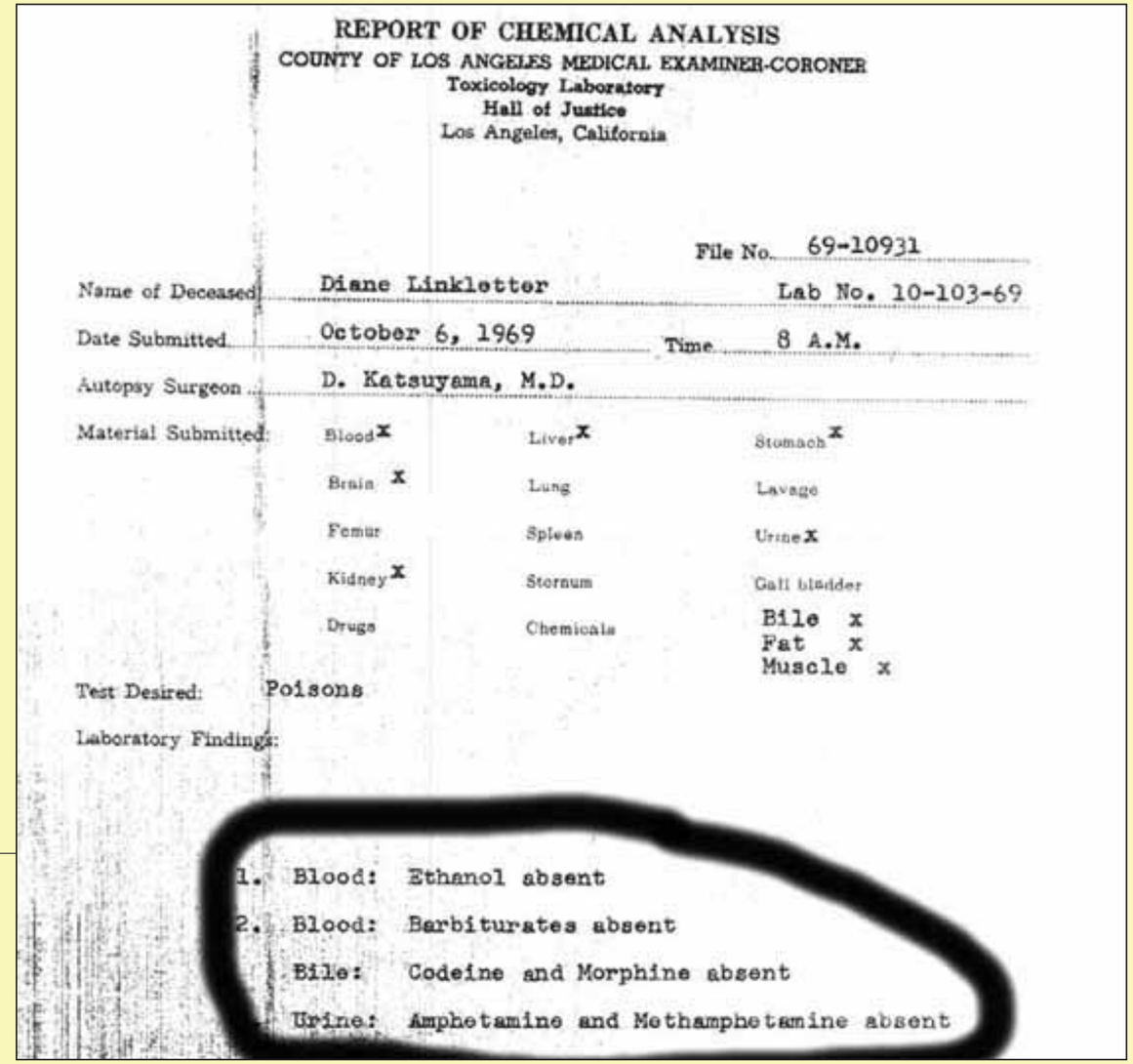
"*I am a monster. I am the 'Son of Sam'. I am programmed to kill. I love to hunt, prowling the streets looking for fair game – tasty meat. I live for the hunt—my life. Sam is a thirsty lad and he won't let me stop killing until he gets his fill of blood*".

-Excerpt from letters from David Berkowitz, The Son of Sam.

Could Berkowitz have been trying to tell us something? Terry Patterson, an army buddy of Berkowitz, stated that when Berkowitz said he was the Son Of Sam he was trying to say he was the Son Of Uncle Sam; a creation of certain elements in the US government.

in a North Hollywood apartment. The cause of death was listed as "*acute cocaine and codeine intoxication.*" It was claimed that a suicide note was found, but friends insisted that the supposed note was either a portion of a diary entry or an unfinished song. One of her friends would later note that, at some point in her life, Judee began to realize that "*there was a part of her that wasn't under her conscious control.*" I'm guessing that Phil Ochs, and quite a few other characters in this story, could relate to that.

It has occurred to me, as I have been working on these first posts of this new series, that a lot of this information will probably make more sense to those of you out there in Readerland who have successfully waded through my last book, Programmed to Kill. Those of you who haven't done so may find yourselves pondering the significance of some of the references contained herein. Much of this material is tied in, to varying degrees, with material that is covered in the book, which last time I checked could be had in the E-version from www.IUniverse.com for the low, low price of just $6. And what else are you going to do with $6 – buy a gallon of gas?



REPORT OF CHEMICAL ANALYSIS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER
Toxicology Laboratory
Hall of Justice
Los Angeles, California

File No. 69-10931

Name of Deceased: Diane Linkletter — Lab No. 10-103-69

Date Submitted: October 6, 1969 — Time: 8 A.M.

Autopsy Surgeon: D. Katsuyama, M.D.

Material Submitted:

Blood x	Liver x	Stomach x
Brain x	Lung	Lavage
Femur	Spleen	Urine x
Kidney x	Sternum	Gall bladder
Drugs	Chemicals	Bile x Fat x Muscle x

Test Desired: Poisons

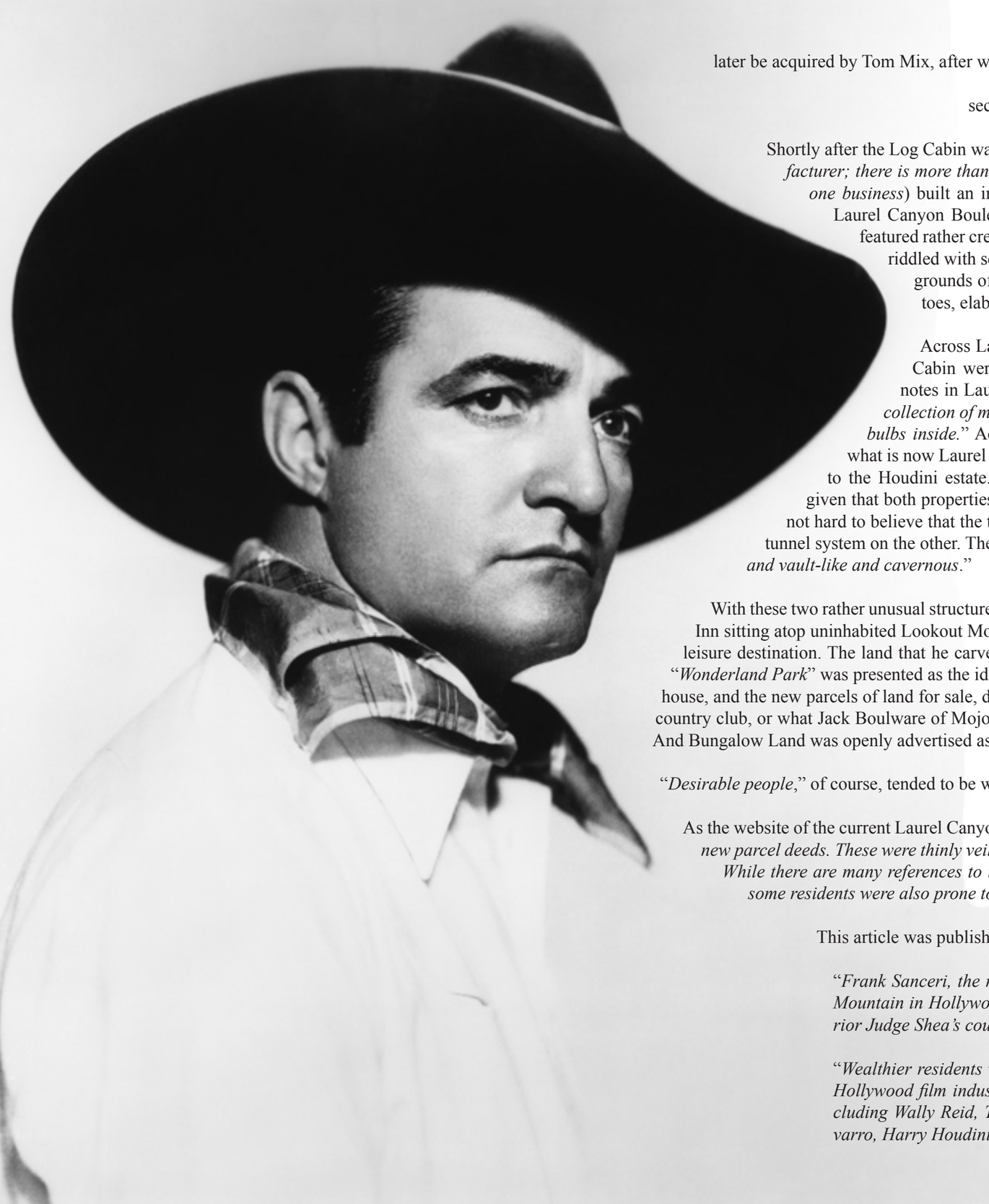
Laboratory Findings:

1. Blood: Ethanol absent
2. Blood: Barbiturates absent
   Bile: Codeine and Morphine absent
   Urine: Amphetamine and Methamphetamine absent

Just months after taking his son Jim aboard the Bon Homme Richard (*see previous pages*), Admiral Morrison would guide his ship into the Tonkin Gulf and stage an false flag attack and Jim Morrison would begin a remarkable transformation into a brooding rock god. The Bon Homme Richard, by the way, was launched on April 29, 1944, under the sponsorship of Catherine McCain, the grandmother of a certain presidential contender.

Until around 1913, Laurel Canyon remained an undeveloped (*and unincorporated*) slice of LA – a pristine wilderness area rich in native flora and fauna. That all began to change when Charles Spencer Mann and his partners began buying up land along what would become Laurel Canyon Boulevard, as well as up Lookout Mountain. A narrow road leading up to the crest of Lookout Mountain was carved out, and upon that crest was constructed a lavish 70-room inn with sweeping views of the city below and the Pacific Ocean beyond. The Lookout Inn featured a large ballroom, riding stables, tennis courts and a golf course, among other amenities. But the inn, alas, would only stand for a decade; in 1923, it burned down, as tends to happen rather frequently in Laurel Canyon.

In 1913, Mann began operating what was billed as the nation's first trackless trolley, to ferry tourists and prospective buyers from Sunset Boulevard up to what would become the corner of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Lookout Mountain Avenue. Around that same time, he built a massive tavern/roadhouse on that very same corner. Dubbed the Laurel Tavern, the structure boasted a 2,000+ square-foot formal dining room, guest rooms, and a bowling alley on the basement level. The Laurel Tavern, of course, would



later be acquired by Tom Mix, after which it would be affectionately known as the Log Cabin.

secret passages, caves and tunnels

Shortly after the Log Cabin was built, a department store mogul (*or a wealthy furniture manufacturer; there is more than one version of the story, or perhaps the man owned more than one business*) built an imposing, castle-like mansion across the road, at the corner of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and what would become Willow Glen Road. The home featured rather creepy towers and parapets, and the foundation is said to have been riddled with secret passageways, tunnels, and hidden chambers. Similarly, the grounds of the estate were (*and still are*) laced with trails leading to grottoes, elaborate stone structures, and hidden caves and tunnels.

Across Laurel Canyon Boulevard, the grounds of the Laurel Tavern/Log Cabin were also laced with odd caves and tunnels. As Michael Walker notes in Laurel Canyon, "*Running up the hillside, behind the house, was a collection of man-made caves built out of stucco, with electric wiring and light bulbs inside.*" According to various accounts, one secret tunnel running under what is now Laurel Canyon Boulevard connected the Log Cabin (*or its guesthouse*) to the Houdini estate. This claim is frequently denounced as an urban legend, but given that both properties are known to possess unusual, uhmm, geological features, it's not hard to believe that the tunnel system on one property was connected at one time to the tunnel system on the other. The Tavern itself, as Gail Zappa would later describe it, was "*huge and vault-like and cavernous*."

With these two rather unusual structures anchoring an otherwise undeveloped canyon, and the Lookout Inn sitting atop uninhabited Lookout Mountain, Mann set about marketing the canyon as a vacation and leisure destination. The land that he carved up into subdivisions with names like "*Bungalow Land*" and "*Wonderland Park*" was presented as the ideal location to build vacation homes. But the new inn and roadhouse, and the new parcels of land for sale, definitely weren't for everyone. The roadhouse was essentially a country club, or what Jack Boulware of Mojo Magazine described as "*a masculine retreat for wealthy men*." And Bungalow Land was openly advertised as "a high class restricted park for desirable people only."

"*Desirable people*," of course, tended to be wealthy people without a great deal of skin pigmentation.

As the website of the current Laurel Canyon Association notes, "*restrictive covenants were attached to the new parcel deeds. These were thinly veiled attempts to limit ownership to white males of a certain class. While there are many references to the bigotry of the developers in our area, it would appear that some residents were also prone to bias and lawlessness.*"

This article was published in a local paper in 1925:

> "*Frank Sanceri, the man who was flogged by self-styled 'white knights' on Lookout Mountain in Hollywood several months ago, was found not guilty by a jury in Superior Judge Shea's courtroom of having unlawfully attacked Astrea Jolley, aged 11.*"
>
> "*Wealthier residents were also attracted to Laurel Canyon. With the creation of the Hollywood film industry in 1910, the canyon attracted a host of 'photoplayers,' including Wally Reid, Tom Mix, Clara Bow, Richard Dix, Norman Kerry, Ramon Navarro, Harry Houdini and Bessie Love.*"

On October 12th, 1940, cowboy-movie star Tom Mix (left) was killed when he lost control of his possibly speeding Cord Phaeton convertible and rolled into a dry wash (now called the Tom Mix Wash) near Florence, Arizona. He was 60 years old.

According to Mix's press agent, the star was a genuine cowboy and swaggering hero of the Wild West: He was born in Texas; fought in the Spanish-American War, the Boxer Rebellion and the Boer War; and served as a sheriff in Kansas, a U.S. marshal in Oklahoma and a Texas Ranger. In fact, Mix was born in Driftwood, Pennsylvania; deserted the Army in 1902; and was a drum major in the Oklahoma Territorial Cavalry band when he went off to Hollywood in 1909.

Along with his famous horse Tony, Mix made 370 full-length Westerns. At the peak of his fame, he was the highest-paid actor in Hollywood, earning as much as $17,500 a week (about $218,000 today). Unfortunately, Mix and Tony had a hard time making the transition to talking pictures. Some people say that the actor's voice was so high-pitched that it undermined his macho cowboy image, but others argue that sound films simply had too much talking for Mix's taste: He preferred wild action sequences to heartfelt conversation.

On the day he died, Mix was driving north from Tucson in his beloved bright-yellow Cord Phaeton sports car. He was driving so fast that he didn't notice--or failed to heed--signs warning that one of the bridges was out on the road ahead. The Phaeton swung into a gully and Mix was smacked in the back of the head by one of the heavy aluminum suitcases he was carrying in the convertible's backseat.

The impact broke the actor's neck and he died almost instantly.

The author of this little slice of Laurel Canyon history would clearly like us to believe that the "*wealthier residents*" were a group quite separate from the violent hooligans roaming the canyon. The history of such groups in Los Angeles, however, clearly suggests otherwise. Paul Young, for example, has written in L.A. Exposed of Los Angeles' early "*vigilance committees, which stepped in to take care of outlaws on their own, often with the complete absolution of the mayor himself. Judge Lynch, for example, formed the Los Angeles Rangers in 1854 with some of the city's top judges, lawyers, and businessmen including tycoon Phineas Banning of the Banning Railroad. And there was the Los Angeles Home Guard, another bloodthirsty paramilitary organization, made up of notable citizens, and the much-feared El Monte Rangers, a group of Texas wranglers that specialized in killing Mexicans. As one would expect, there was no regard for the victim's rights in such kangaroo courts. Victims were often dragged from their homes, jail cells, even churches, and beaten, horse-whipped, tortured, mutilated, or castrated before being strung up on the nearest tree*."

that, dear readers, is how we do things out here on the 'left' coast

Before moving on, I need to mention here that, of the eight celebrity residents of Laurel Canyon listed by the Association, fully half died under questionable circumstances, and three of the four did so on days with occult significance. While Bessie Love, Norman Kerry, Richard Dix and Clara Bow all lived long and healthy lives, Ramon Navarro, as we have already seen, was ritually murdered in his home on Laurel Canyon Boulevard on the eve of Halloween, 1968. Nearly a half-century earlier, on January 18, 1923, matinee idol Wallace Reid was found dead in a padded cell at the mental institution to which he had been confined. Just thirty-one years old, Reid's death was attributed to morphine addiction, though it was never explained how he would have fed that habit while confined to a cell in a mental hospital.

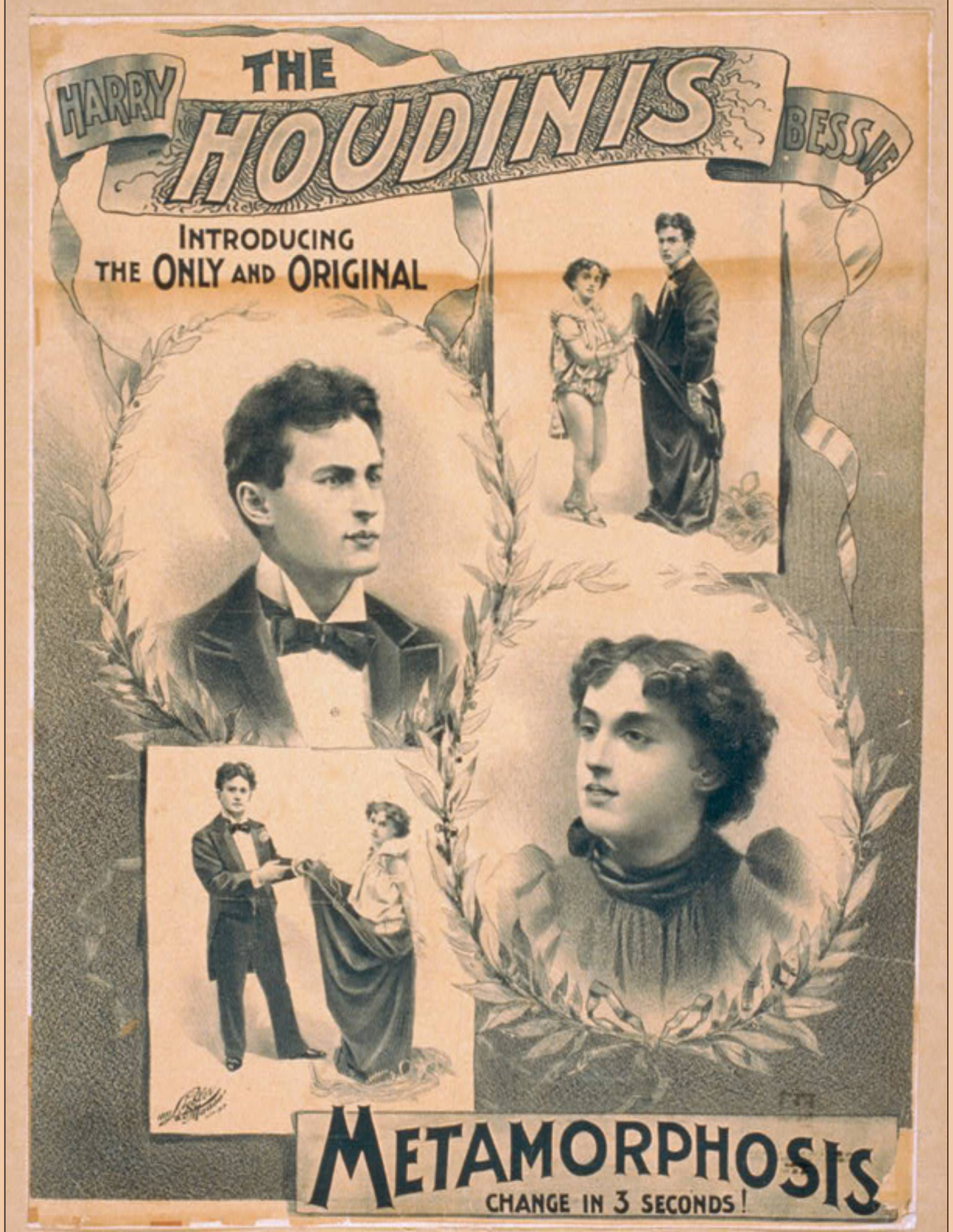
tom mix

Tom Mix died on a lonely stretch of Arizona highway in the proverbial single-car crash on October 12, 1940 (*the birthday of notorious occultist Aleister Crowley*), when he quite unexpectedly encountered some temporary construction barricades that had been set up alongside a reportedly washed-out bridge. Although he wasn't speeding (*by most accounts*), Mix was nevertheless allegedly unable to stop in time and veered off the road, while a crew of what were described as "*workmen*" reportedly looked on. It wasn't the impact that killed Mix though, but rather a severe blow to the back of the head and neck, purportedly delivered during the crash by an aluminum case he had been carrying in the back seat of his car. There is now a roadside marker at the spot where Mix died. If you should happen to stop by to have a look, you might as well pay a visit to the Florence Military Reservation as well, since it's just a stone's throw away.

harry houdini

Harry Houdini died on Halloween day, 1926, purportedly of an attack of appendicitis precipitated by a blow to the stomach. The problem with that story, however, is that medical science now recognizes it to be an impossibility. According to a recent book about the famed illusionist (*The Secret Life of Houdini, by William Kalush and Larry Sloman*), Houdini was likely murdered by poisoning. Questions have been raised, the book notes, by the curious lack of an autopsy, an "*experimental serum*" that Houdini was apparently given in the hospital, and indications that his wife, Bess, may have been poisoned as well (*though she survived*). On March 23, 2007, an exhumation of Houdini's remains was formally requested by his surviving family members. It is unclear at this time (*2008*) when, or even if, that will happen.

Houdini's death, on October 31, 1926, came exactly eight years after the first death to occur in what would become known as the "*Houdini house*." In 1918, not long after the home was built, a lover's quarrel arose on one of the home's balconies during a Halloween/birthday party. The gay lover of the original owner's son report-



edly ended up splattered on the ground below. According to legend, the businessman managed to get his son off, but only after paying off everyone he could find to pay off, including the trial judge. The aftermath of the party proved to be financially devastating for the family, and the home was apparently put up for sale.

Not long after that, as fate would have it, Harry Houdini was looking for a place to stay in the Hollywood area, as he had decided to break into the motion picture business. He found the perfect home in Laurel Canyon – the home that would, forever after, carry his name. By most accounts, he lived there from about 1919 through the early 1920s, during a brief movie career in which he starred in a handful of Hollywood films. A key scene in one of those films, "*The Grim Game*," was reportedly shot at the top of Lookout Mountain, near where the Lookout Inn then stood.

On October 31, 1959, precisely thirty-three years after Houdini's death, and forty-one years after the unnamed party guest's death, the distinctive mansion on the corner of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Willow Glen Road burned to the ground in a fire of mysterious origin (*the ruins of the estate remain today, undisturbed for nearly fifty years*). On October 31, 1981, exactly twenty-two years after the fire across the road, the legendary Log Cabin on the other side of Laurel Canyon Boulevard also burned to the ground, in yet another fire of mysterious origin (*some reports speculated that it was a drug lab explosion*). And twenty-five years after that, on October 31, 2006, The Secret Life of Houdini was published, challenging the conventional wisdom on Houdini's death.

Far more compelling than the revelations about Houdini's death, however, was something else about the illusionist that the book revealed for the first time: Harry Houdini was a spook working for both the U.S. Secret Service and Scotland Yard. And his traveling escape act, as it turns out, was pretty much a cover for intelligence activities. Just as, as I think I wrote in a previous newsletter, John Wilkes Booth used his career as a traveling stage performer as a cover for intelligence operations. And just as – sorry to have to break it to you – many of your favorite movie and television actors and musical artists continue in that tradition today.

Houdini House

http://fredericsdurbin.wordpress.com/2009/12/12/the-winchester-mystery-house/

The book, of course, doesn't make such reckless allegations about any performers other than Houdini. I added all of that. What the book does do, however, is compellingly document that Houdini was, in fact, an intelligence asset who used his magic act as a cover. Not only did the authors obtain corroborating documentation from Scotland Yard, they also received an endorsement of their claim from no less an authority than John McLaughlin, former Acting Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (*who knew it was that easy? – maybe I should give John a call and run some of my theories by him*).

It appears then that, of the eight celebrity residents of Laurel Canyon listed on the Laurel Canyon Association website, at least two (*Novarro and Houdini*), and possibly as many as four, were murdered.

That seemed like a rather high homicide rate to me, so I looked up a recent study on the Internet and found that, on average, a white person in this country has about a 1-in-345 chance of being murdered. Non-white persons, of course, have a far greater chance of being murdered, but nowhere near the 1-in-4 to 1-in-2 odds that a white celebrity living in Laurel Canyon faces.

Statistically speaking, if you were a famous actor in the 1920s, you would have been better off playing a round of Russian Roulette than living in Laurel Canyon.

Anyway … two ambitious projects in the 1940s brought significant changes to Laurel Canyon. First, Laurel Canyon Boulevard was extended into the San Fernando Valley, providing access to the canyon from both the north and the south. The widened boulevard was now a winding thoroughfare, providing direct access to the Westside from the Valley.

Traffic, needless to say, increased considerably, which probably worked out well for the planners of the other project, because it meant that the increased traffic brought about by that other project probably wasn't noticed at all.

And that's good, you see, because the other project was a secret one, so if I tell you about it, you have to promise not to tell anyone else.

What would become known as Lookout Mountain Laboratory (left) was originally envisioned as an air defense center. Built in 1941 and nestled in two-and-a-half secluded acres off what is now Wonderland Park Avenue, the installation was hidden from view and surrounded by an electrified fence. By 1947, the facility featured a fully operational movie studio. In fact, it is claimed that it was perhaps the world's only completely self-contained movie studio. With 100,000 square feet of floor space, the covert studio included sound stages, screening rooms, film processing labs, editing facilities, an animation department, and seventeen climate-controlled film vaults. It also had underground parking, a helicopter pad and a bomb shelter.

Over its lifetime, the studio produced some 19,000 *classified* motion pictures – more than all the Hollywood studios combined (*which I guess makes Laurel Canyon the real 'motion picture capital of the world'*). Officially, the facility was run by the U.S. Air Force and did nothing more nefarious than process AEC footage of atomic and nuclear bomb tests. The studio, however, was clearly equipped to do far more than just process film. There are indications that Lookout Mountain Laboratory had an advanced research and development department that was on the cutting edge of new film technologies. Such technological advances as 3-D effects were apparently first developed at the Laurel Canyon site. And Hollywood luminaries like John Ford, Jimmy Stewart, Howard Hawks, Ronald Reagan, Bing Crosby, Walt Disney and Marilyn Monroe were given clearance to work at the facility on undisclosed projects. There is no indication that any of them ever spoke of their work at the clandestine studio.

The facility retained as many as 250 producers, directors, technicians, editors, animators, etc., both civilian and military, all with top security clearances – and all reporting to work in a secluded corner of Laurel Canyon. Accounts vary as to when the facility ceased operations. Some claim it was in 1969, while others say the installation remained in operation longer. In any event, by all accounts the secret bunker had been up and running for more than twenty years before Laurel Canyon's rebellious teen years, and it remained operational for the most turbulent of those years.

The existence of the facility remained unknown to the general public until the early 1990s, though it had long been rumored that the CIA operated a secret movie studio some-

where in or near Hollywood. Filmmaker Peter Kuran was the first to learn of its existence, through classified documents he obtained while researching his 1995 documentary, "*Trinity and Beyond.*" And yet even today, some 15 years after its public disclosure, one would have trouble finding even a single mention of this secret military/intelligence facility anywhere in the '*conspiracy*' literature.

I think we can all agree though that there is nothing the least bit suspicious about any of that, so let's move on.

rebel without a cause

In the 1950s, as Barney Hoskyns has written in Hotel California, Laurel Canyon was home to all "*the hippest young actors,*" including, according to Hoskyns, Marlon Brando, James Dean, James Coburn and Dennis Hopper. In addition to Hopper and Dean, yet another of the young stars of "*Rebel Without a Cause*" found a home in the canyon as well: Natalie Wood. In fact, Natalie lived in the very home that Cass Elliot would later turn into a Laurel Canyon party house. A fourth young star of the film, Sal Mineo, lived at the mouth of the canyon, and the fifth member of the "Rebel Without a Cause" posse, Nick Adams, lived just a mile or so away (as the crow flies) in neighboring Coldwater Canyon.

With the exception of Hopper, all of their lives were tragically cut short, proving once again that Laurel Canyon can be a very dangerous place to live.

danger lurks in the canyon

First there was that great American icon, James Dean, who ostensibly died in a near head-on collision on September 30, 1955, at the tender age of twenty-four. Next to fall was Nick Adams, who had known Dean before either were stars, when both were working the mean streets of Hollywood as young male prostitutes. Adams died on February 6, 1968, at the age of thirty-six, in his home at 2126 El Roble Lane in Coldwater Canyon. His official cause of death was listed as suicide, of course, but as actor Forrest Tucker has noted, "*All of Hollywood knows Nick Adams was knocked off.*" Nick's relatives reportedly received numerous hang-up calls on the day of his death, and his tape recorder, journals and various other papers and personal effects were conspicuously missing from his home. His lifeless body, sitting upright in a chair, was discovered by his attorney, Ervin "*Tip*" Roeder. On June 10, 1981, Roeder and his wife, actress Jenny Maxwell (*best known for being spanked by Elvis in "Blue Hawaii"*), were gunned down outside their Beverly Hills condo.

sal, natalie, wc, mary, roscoe, errol, orson, roger, don, glenn, paul and robert

Next in line was Sal Mineo, whose murder on February 12, 1976 we have already covered. Last to fall was Natalie Wood, who died on November 29, 1981 in a drowning incident that has never been adequately explained. Before being found floating in the waters off Catalina Island, Wood had been aboard a private yacht in the company of actors Robert Wagner and Christopher Walken. She was forty-three when she was laid to rest.

The list of famous former residents of the canyon also includes the names of W.C. Fields, Mary Astor, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Errol Flynn, Orson Welles, and Robert Mitchum, who was infamously arrested on marijuana charges in 1948 at 8334 Ridpath Drive, the same street that would later be home to rockers Roger McGuinn, Don Henley and Glen Frey, as well as to Paul Rothchild, producer of both The Doors and Love. Mitchum's arrest, by the way, appears to have been a thoroughly staged affair that cemented his '*Hollywood bad boy*' image and gave his career quite a boost, but I guess that's not really relevant here.

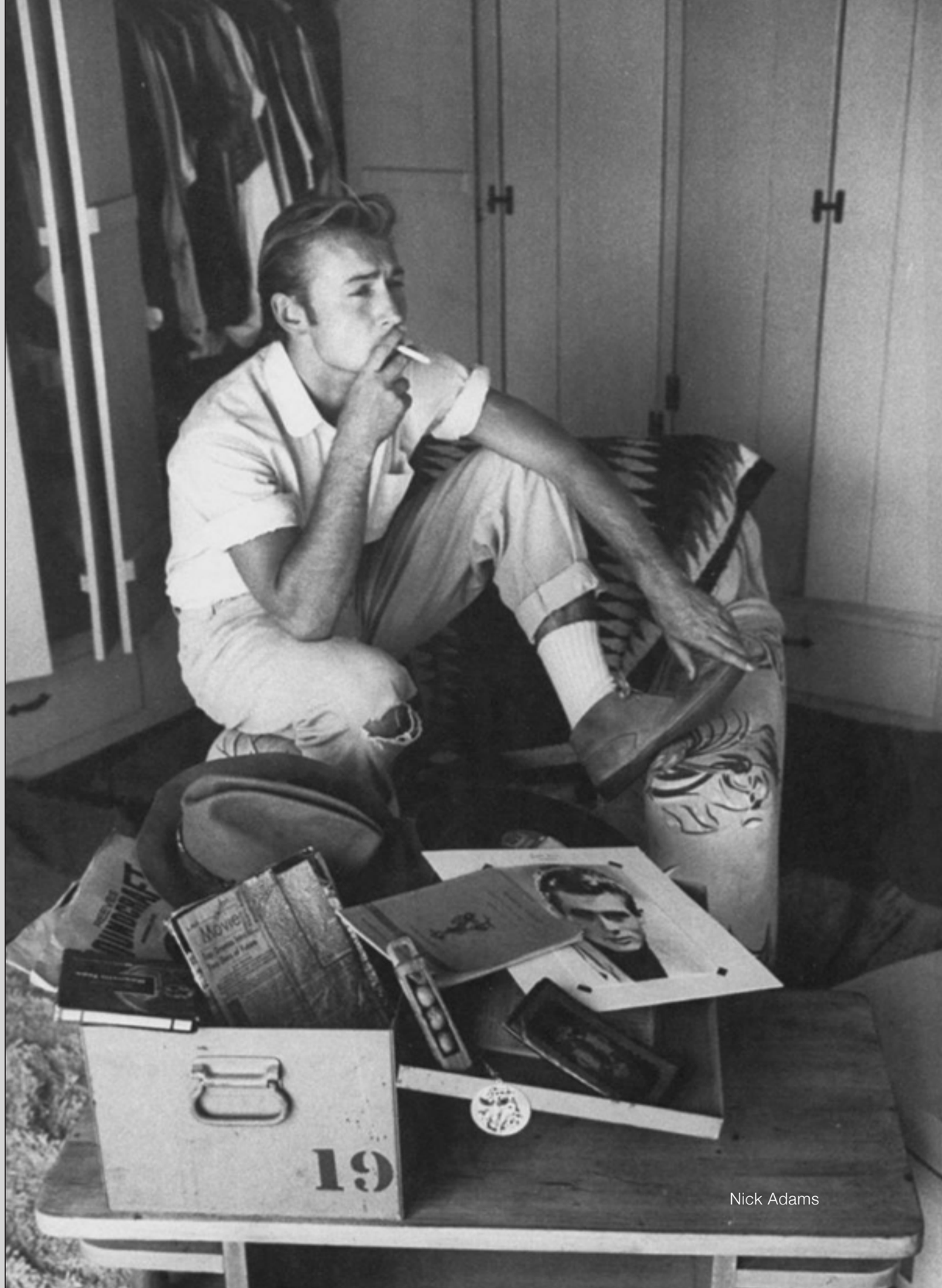
the heinlein maneuver

Another famous resident of Laurel Canyon, apparently in the 1940s, was science-fiction writer Robert Heinlein, who reportedly resided at 8775 Lookout Mountain Avenue. Like so many other characters in this story, Heinlein was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and he had served as a naval officer. After that, he embarked on a successful writing career. And despite the fact that he was, by any objective measure, a rabid right-winger, his work was warmly embraced by the Flower Power generation.

stranger in a strange land

Heinlein's best-known work is the novel Stranger in a Strange Land, which many in the Laurel Canyon scene found to be hugely influential. Ed Sanders has written, in The Family, that the book "*helped provide a theoretical basis for Manson's family.*" Charlie frequently used Strange Land terminology when addressing his flock and he named his first Family-born son Valentine Michael Manson, in honor of the book's lead character.

David Crosby was a big Heinlein fan as well. In his autobiography, he references Heinlein on more than one occasion,



Nick Adams

and proclaims that, "*In a society where people can go armed, it makes everybody a little more polite, as Robert A. Heinlein says in his books*." Frank Zappa was also a member of the Robert Heinlein fan club. Barry Miles notes in his biography of the rock icon that his home contained "*a copy of Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince and other essential sixties reading, including Robert Heinlein's sci-fi classic, Stranger in a Strange Land, from which Zappa borrowed the word 'discorporate' for [the song] 'Absolutely Free*.'"

coincidence?

And that, fearless readers, more or less brings us to the Laurel Canyon era that we are primarily concerned with, the wild and wooly 1960s, which we will take a closer look at in the next chapter of this saga.

So what, if anything, have we learned today? We have learned that murder and random acts of violence have been a part of the culture of the canyon since the earliest days of its development. We have also learned that spooks posing as entertainers have likewise been a part of the canyon scene since the earliest days. And, finally, we have learned that spooks who didn't even bother to pose as entertainers were streaming into the canyon to report to work at Lookout Mountain Laboratory for at least twenty years before the first rock star set foot there.

coincidence?

One final note is in order here: we are supposed to believe that all of these musical icons just sort of spontaneously came together in Laurel Canyon (*one finds the words "serendipitous" sprinkled freely throughout the literature*). But how many peculiar coincidences do we have to overlook in order to believe that this was just a chance gathering?

coincidence?

Let's suppose, hypothetically speaking, that you are the young man and you have recently arrived in Laurel Canyon and now find yourself fronting a band that is on the verge of taking the country by storm. Just a mile or so down Laurel Canyon Boulevard from you lives another guy who also recently arrived in Laurel Canyon, and who also happens to front a band on the verge of stardom.

coincidence?

He happens to be married to a girl that you attended kindergarten with, and her dad, like yours, was involved in atomic weapons research and testing (*Admiral George Morrison for a time did classified work at White Sands*). Her husband's dad, meanwhile, is involved in another type of WMD research: chemical warfare.

coincidence?

This other guy's business partner/manager is a spooky ex-Marine who just happens to have a cousin who, bizarrely enough, also fronts a rock band on the verge of superstardom. And this third rock-star-on-the-rise also happens to live in Laurel Canyon, just a mile or two from your house.

coincidence?

Just down a couple of other streets, also within walking distance of your home, live two other kids who – wouldn't you know it? – also happen to front a new rock band. These two kids happened to attend the same Alexandria, Virginia high school that you attended, and one of them also attended Annapolis, just like your dad did, and just like your kindergarten friend's dad did.

coincidence?

Though almost all of you hail from (*or spent a substantial portion of your childhood in*) the Washington, D.C. area, you now find yourselves on the opposite side of the country, in an isolated canyon high above the city of Los Angeles, where you are all clustered around a secret military installation. Given his background in research on atomic weapons, your father is probably familiar to some extent with the existence and operations of Lookout Mountain Laboratory, as is the father of your kindergarten friend, and probably the fathers of a few other Laurel Canyon figures as well.

My question here, I guess, is this: what do you suppose the odds are that all of that just came together purely by chance? Coincidence?

Nick Adams' collection of James Dean letters

"*Call them freaks, the underground, the counter-culture, flower children or hippies – they are all loose labels for the youth culture of the 60s …*"
-Barry Miles, author of Hippie

"*This is how I remember my life. Other folks may not have the same memories, even though we might have shared some of the same experiences.*"

So begins David Crosby's autobiography, Long Time Gone (*co-written by Carl Gottlieb*). As it turns out, quite a few other folks seem to remember some people in Crosby's life who are all but ignored in the lengthy book. The names are casually dropped only once, and not by Crosby but rather in a quote from manager Jim Dickson in which he describes the scene at the Sunset Strip clubs when The Byrds played: "*We had them all. We had Jack Nicholson dancing, we had Peter Fonda dancing with Odetta, we had Vito and his Freakers.*"

vito and his freakers

Following that brief mention by Dickson, Gottlieb briefly explains to readers that, "*Vito and his Freakers were an acid-drenched extended family of brain-damaged cohabitants.*" And that, in an incredibly self-indulgent 489-page tome, is the only mention you will find of "*Vito and his Freakers*" – despite the fact that, by just about all other accounts, the group dismissed as "*brain-damaged cohabitants*" played a key role in the early success of Crosby's band. And the early success of Arthur Lee's band. And the early success of Frank Zappa's band. And the early success of Jim Morrison's band. But especially in the early success of David Crosby's band.

As Barry Miles noted in his biography of Frank Zappa, "*The Byrds were closely associated with Vito and the Freaks: Vito Paulekas, his wife Zsou and Karl Franzoni, the leaders of a group of about 35 dancers whose antics enlivened the Byrds early gigs.*" In Waiting for the Sun, Barney Hoskyns writes that the early success of The Byrds and other bands was due in no small part to "*the roving troupe of self-styled 'freaks' led by ancient beatnik Vito Paulekas and his trusty, lusty sidekick Carl Franzoni.*" Alban "*Snoopy*" Pfisterer, former drummer and keyboardist for the band Love, went further still, claiming that Vito actually "*got the Byrds together, as I remember – they did a lot of rehearsing at his pad.*"

where would we be without sex orgies?

And according to various other accounts, The Byrds did indeed utilize Vito's '*pad*' as a rehearsal studio, as did Arthur Lee's band. More importantly, the Freaks drew the crowds into the clubs to see the fledgling bands perform. But as important as their contribution was to helping launch the careers of the Laurel Canyon bands, "*Vito and his Freakers*" were notable for something else as well; according to Barry Miles, writing in his book Hippie, "*The first hippies in Hollywood, perhaps the first hippies anywhere, were Vito, his wife Zsou, Captain Fuck and their group of about thirty-five dancers. Calling themselves Freaks, they lived a semi-communal life and engaged in sex orgies and free-form dancing whenever they could.*"

Some of those who were on the scene at the time agree with Miles' assessment that Vito and his troupe were indeed the very first hippies. Arthur Lee, for example, boasted that they "*started the whole hippie thing: Vito, Karl, Szou, Beatle Bob, Bryan and me.*" One of David Crosby's fellow Byrds, Chris Hillman, also credited the strange group with being at the forefront of the hippie movement: "*Carl and all those guys were way ahead of everyone on hippiedom fashion.*" Ray Manzarek of The Doors remembered them as well: "*There were these guys named Carl and Vito who had a dance troupe of gypsy freaks. They were let in for free, because they were these quintessential hippies, which was great for tourists.*"

If these folks really were the very first hippies, the first riders of that '*counter-cultural*' wave, then we should probably try to get to know them. As it turns out, however, that is not such an easy thing to do. Most accounts – and there aren't all that many – offer little more than a few first names, with no consensus agreement on how those first names are even spelled ("*Karl" and "Carl" appear interchangeably, as do "Szou" and "Zsou," and "Godot" and "Godo*"). But for you, dear readers – because I apparently have way too much time on my hands – I have gone the extra mile and sifted through the detritus to dig up at least some of the sordid details.

By all accounts the troupe was led by one Vito Paulekas, whose full name is said to have been Vitautus Alphonsus Paulekas. Born the son of a Lithuanian sausage-maker circa 1912, Vito hailed from Lowell, Massachusetts. From a young age, he developed a habit of running afoul of the law. According to Miles, he spent a year-and-a-half in a reformatory as a teenager and "*was busted several times after that*." In 1938, he was convicted of armed robbery and handed a 25-year sentence following a botched attempt at holding up a movie theater. By 1942, however, just four years later, he had been released into the custody, so to speak, of the US Merchant Marine (*a branch of the US Navy during wartime*), ostensibly to escort ships running lend-lease missions.

Following his release from the service, circa 1946, Vito arrived in Los Angeles. What he did for the next fifteen years or so is anyone's guess; there is virtually no mention of those years in any of the accounts I have stumbled across. What is known is that by the early 1960s, Vito was ensconced in an unassuming building at the corner of Laurel Avenue and Beverly Boulevard, just below the mouth of Laurel Canyon (*and very near Jay Sebring's hair salon*). At street level was his young wife Szou's clothing boutique, which has been credited by some of those making the scene in those days with being the very first to introduce '*hippie*' fashions. Upstairs was the living quarters for Vito, Szou and their young son, Godot. Downstairs was what was known as the "*Vito Clay*" studio, where, according to Miles and various others, Paulekas "*made a living of sorts by giving clay modeling lessons to Beverly Hills matrons who found the atmosphere in his studio exciting.*"

Vito (left), with his Hot Dog exposed with David the Hot Dog Man ©1990

According to most accounts, it wasn't really the Mayan-tomb decor of the studio that many of the matrons found so exciting, but rather Vito's reportedly insatiable sexual appetite and John Holmesian physique. In any event, Vito's students also apparently included such Hollywood luminaries as Jonathon Winters, Mickey Rooney and Steve Allen. Nevertheless, though Paulekas claimed to be a serious artist (*a painter, poet, dancer and photographer, in addition to a sculptor*), there is scant evidence that I have seen that supports such claims (*I am not, however, the most objective of art critics, as I am, as best I can determine, apparently not cultured enough to 'get' the majority of what passes for art*).

franzoni and scallacci

As for his erstwhile sidekick, Carl Orestes Franzoni, he has claimed in interviews that his "*mother was a countess*" and his father "*was a stone carver from Rutland, Vermont. The family was brought from Italy, from the quarries in the northern part of Italy, to cut the stone for the monuments of the United States.*" That would make his father, I'm guessing here, someone of some importance in the Mason community, if Carl is to be believed. By Franzoni's own account, he grew up as something of a young hoodlum in Cincinnati, Ohio, and later went into business with some shady Sicilian characters selling mail-order breast and penis pumps out of an address on LA's fabled Melrose Avenue. As Franzoni remembered it, his business "*partner's name was Scallacci, Joe Scallacci – the same name as the famous murderer Scallacci. Probably from the same family.*" Probably so.

linda bopp, butchie, beatle bob,
emerald and karen yum yum

Franzoni, born circa 1934, hooked up with the older Paulekas sometime around 1963 and soon after became his constant sidekick. As previously mentioned, the group also included Vito's wife Szou, an ex-cheerleader who had hooked up with Paulekas when she was just sixteen and he was already in his fifties. Also in the troupe was a young Rory Flynn (*Errol Flynn's statuesque daughter*), a bizarre character named Ricky Applebaum who had half a moustache on one side of his face and half a beard on the other, most of the young girls who would later become part of Frank Zappa's GTO project, and a lot of other oddball characters who donned ridiculous pseudonyms like Linda Bopp, Butchie, Beatle Bob, Emerald, and Karen Yum Yum.

The Laurel Canyon Country Store today

Also flitting about the periphery of the dance troupe were a young Gail Sloatman (*the future Mrs. Zappa, for those who have already forgotten*) and a curious character on the LA music scene by the name of Kim Fowley. The two were, for a time, closely allied, and even cut a record together as "*Bunny and the Bear*" that Fowley produced ("*America's Sweethearts*"). In 1966, Fowley produced a record for Vito as well, billed as "*Vito and the Hands*." The 7" single, "*Where It's At*," which featured the musicianship of some of Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, came no closer to entering the charts than did Fowley and Sloatman's effort. Sloatman, by the way, soon found work as an assistant and booking agent for Elmer Valentine, who we will meet shortly.

two chorus girls grabbed my six-year-old cock and balls

Fowley, as with so many other characters in this story, has a rather interesting history. He was born in 1939, the son of actor Douglas Fowley, a WWII Navy veteran and attendee of St. Francis Xavier Military Academy. According to the younger Fowley's account, he was initially abandoned to a foster home but later taken back and raised by his father. He grew up in upscale Malibu, California, where he shared his childhood home with "*a bunch of actors and guys from the Navy.*" At the age of six-and-a-half, Fowley had an unusual experience that he later shared with author Michael Walker: dressed up in a sailor suit by his dad and his Navy buddies, he was taken "*to a photographer named William, who took a picture of me in the sailor suit. His studio was next door to the Canyon [Country] Store.*" Right after that, he was driven down Laurel Canyon Boulevard to the near-mythical Schwabs Drugstore, where "*everybody cheered and two chorus girls grabbed my six-year-old cock and balls and stuck a candy cigarette in my mouth.*"

nice story, mr. fowley, thanks for sharing.

It's probably safe to assume that childhood experiences such as that helped to prepare Fowley for his later employment as a young male street hustler, a profession that he practiced on the seedy streets of the city of angels (*by Fowley's own account, I should probably add here, just as it was James Dean himself who claimed to have worked those same streets with Nick Adams*). Following that, Fowley spent some time serving with the Army National Guard, after which he devoted his life to working in the LA music industry as a musician, writer and producer – as well as, according to some accounts, a master manipulator.

sleepwalkers

Around 1957, Fowley played in a band known as the Sleepwalkers, alongside future Beach Boy Bruce Johnston. At times, a diminutive young guitarist named Phil Spector – who had moved out to LA with his mother not too many years earlier, following the suicide of his father when Phil was just nine – sat in with the group. During the 1960s, Fowley was best known for producing such ridiculous yet beloved novelty songs as the Hollywood Argyles' "*Alley Oop*" and the Rivington's "*Papa Oom-Mow-Mow*," though he also did more respectable work, such as collaborating on some Byrds' tracks and having some of his original songs covered by both the Beach Boys and the Flying Burrito Brothers.

In 1975, Fowley had perhaps his greatest success when he created the Runaways, further lowering the bar that Frank Zappa had already set rather low some years earlier when he had created and recorded the GTOs. The Runaways featured underage versions of Joan Jett and Lita Ford, whom Fowley tastefully attired in leather and lingerie. As he would later boast, "*Everyone loved the idea of 16-year-old girls playing guitars and singing about fucking.*" Especially, I would imagine, their mothers and fathers. Some of the young girls in the band, including Cherie Curry, would later accuse Fowley of requiring them to perform sexual services for he and his associates as a prerequisite for membership in the group.

James Dean

Prior to assembling the Runaways, one of Fowley's proudest accomplishments had been producing the 1969 album "*I'm Back and I'm Proud*" by rockabilly pioneer Gene Vincent, featuring backing vocals by Canyonite Linda Ronstadt. Just two years later, Vincent – a Navy veteran raised in that penultimate Navy town, Norfolk, Virginia – permanently checked out of the Hotel California on October 12, 1971 (*there's that date again*), due reportedly to a ruptured stomach ulcer. Not long before his death, Vincent had been on tour in the UK, but he had hastily returned to the US due to pressure from, among others, promoter Don Arden. Known none-too-affectionately as the "*Al Capone of Pop*," Arden had a penchant for guns and violence and he was known to openly boast of his affiliation with powerful organized crime figures. In addition to being a business partner of the equally nefarious Michael Jeffery, Arden was also the father of Sharon Osbourne and the former manager of her husband's band, Black Sabbath … but here I have surely digressed, so let's try to bring this back around to where we left off.

One other accomplishment of Fowley's bears mentioning here: he received a guest vocalist credit on the Mothers of Invention album "*Freak Out*," as did both Vito Paulekas and his sidekick, Carl Franzoni, to whom the song "*Hungry Freaks, Daddy*" was dedicated (*some sources claim that Bobby Beausoleil also provided guest vocals on Zappa's debut album, though his name does not appear in the album's credits*).

no clubs

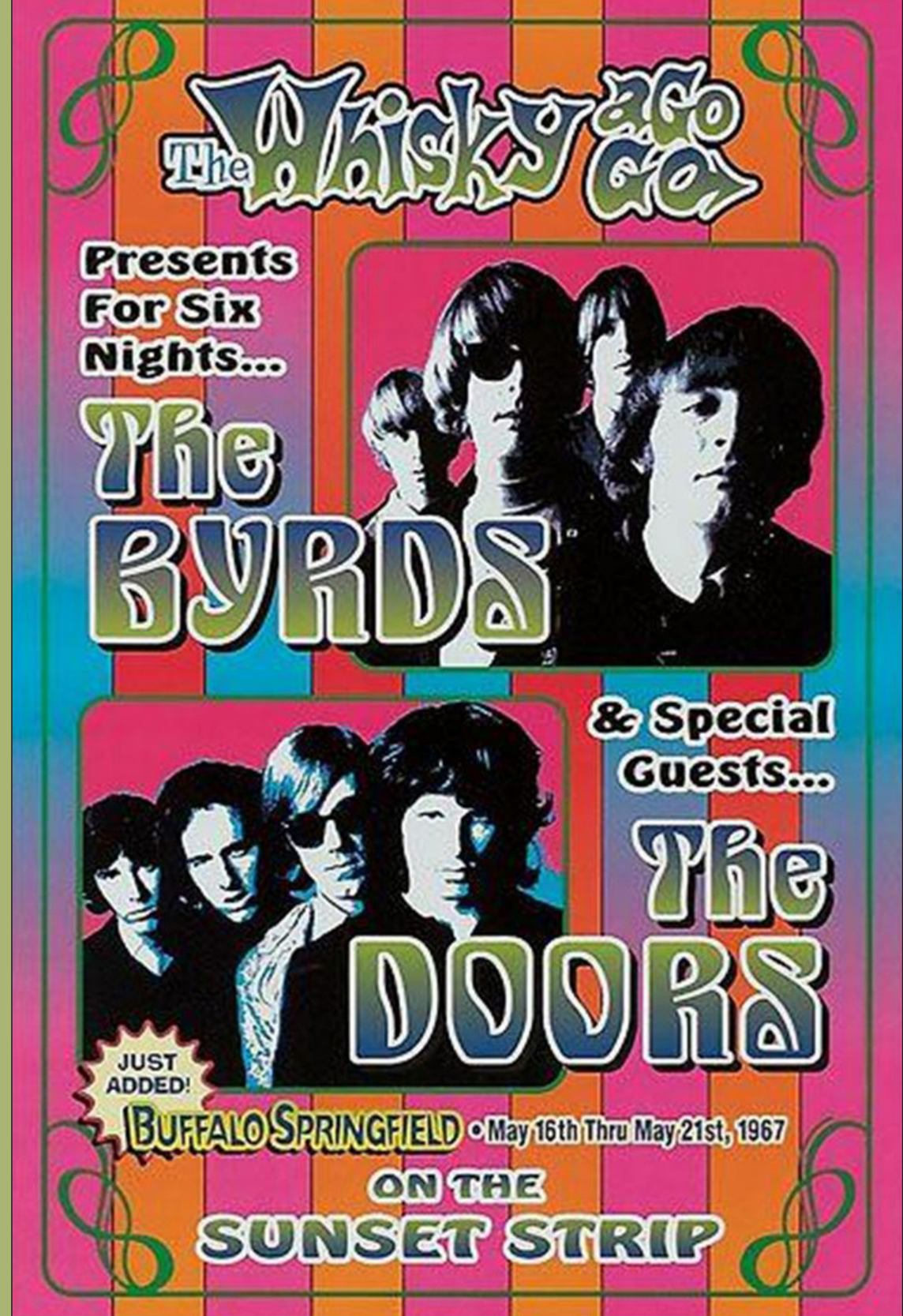
By at least as early as 1962, not long before Carl Franzoni joined the group, the Freak troupe was already hitting the clubs a couple nights each week to refine their unique style of dance (*perhaps best described as an epileptic seizure set to music*) and show off their distinctively unappealing, though soon to be quite popular, fashion sense. In those early days, they danced to local black R&B bands and to a band out of Fresno known as the Gauchos, in dives far removed from the fabled Sunset Strip – because, Franzoni has said, "*There were no white bands [in LA] yet,*" and "*There were no clubs on Sunset Boulevard*."

new clubs spring up, old clubs reemerge

That, of course, was all about to quickly change. As if by magic, new clubs began to spring up along the legendary Sunset Strip beginning around 1964, and old clubs considered to be long past their prime miraculously reemerged. In January 1964, a young Chicago vice cop named Elmer Valentine opened the doors to the now world-famous Whisky-A-Go-Go nightclub. Just over a year later, in spring of 1965, he opened a second soon-to-be-wildly-popular club, The Trip. Not long before that, near the end of 1964, the legendary Ciro's nightclub began undergoing extensive renovations. Opened in 1940 by Billy Wilkerson, an associate of Bugsy Siegel, the upscale club had flourished for the first twenty years of its existence, with a clientele that regularly included Hollywood royalty and organized crime figures. By the early 1960s though the Strip was dead, and the once prestigious club had gone to seed.

Ciro's reopened in early 1965, just before The Trip opened its doors and just in time, as it turns out, to host the very first club appearance by the musical act that was about to become the first Laurel Canyon band to commit a song to vinyl: The Byrds. By 1967, Gazzaris had opened up on the Strip as well, and in the early 1970s Valentine would open yet another club that endures to this day, The Roxy. Smaller clubs like the London Fog, where The Doors got their first booking as the house band in early 1966, opened their doors to the public in the mid 1960s as well.

The timing of the opening of Valentine's first two clubs, and the reopening of Ciro's, could not have been any more fortuitous. The paint was barely dry on the walls of the new clubs when bands like Love and The Doors and The Byrds and Buffalo Springfield and the Turtles and the Mothers and the Lovin' Spoonful came knocking. The problem, however, was that the new clubs were not yet well known, Ciro's had been long left for dead, and nobody had the slightest idea who any of these newfangled bands were. What was needed then was a way to create a buzz around the clubs that would draw people in and kick-start the Strip back to life, as well as, of course,



launch the careers of the new bands. The bands themselves could not be expected to fill the new clubs, since, besides being unknown, they also – and yeah, I know that you don't really want to hear this and I will undoubtedly be deluged with letters of complaint, but I'm going to say it anyway – weren't very good, at least not in their live incarnations. To be sure, they sounded great on vinyl, but that was largely due to the fact that the band members themselves didn't actually play on their records (*at least not in the early days*), and the rich vocal harmonies that were a trademark of the '*Laurel Canyon sound*' were created in the studio with a good deal of multi-tracking and overdubs. On stage, it was another matter entirely.

freak squad

Enter then the wildly flamboyant and colorful Freak squad, who were one key component of the strategy that was devised to lure patrons into the clubs (*the other component of the strategy, hinted at in one of the quotes near the top of this post, will be covered later*). Vito and Carl's dancers were a fixture on the Sunset Strip scene from the very moment that the new clubs opened their doors to the public, and they were, by all accounts, treated like royalty by the club owners. As John Hartmann, proprietor of the Kaleidoscope Club, acknowledged, he "*would let Vito and his dancers into the Kaleidoscope free every week because they attracted people. They were really hippies, and so we had to have them. They got in free pretty much everywhere they went. They blessed your joint. They validated you. If they're the essence of hippiedom and you're trying to be a hippie nightclub, you need hippies.*"

and the dancers were always there ... giving life

As the aforementioned Kim Fowley put it, with characteristic bluntness, "*A band didn't have to be good, as long as the dancers were there.*" Indeed, the band was largely irrelevant, other than to provide some semblance of a soundtrack for the real show, which was taking place on the dance floor. Gail Zappa candidly admitted that, even at her husband's shows, the real attraction was not on the stage: "*The customers came to see the freaks dance. Nobody ever talks about that, but that was the case.*" Frank added that, "*As soon as they arrived they would make things happen, because they were dancing in a way nobody had seen before, screaming and yelling out on the floor and doing all kinds of weird things. They were dressed in a way that nobody could believe, and they gave life to everything that was going on.*"

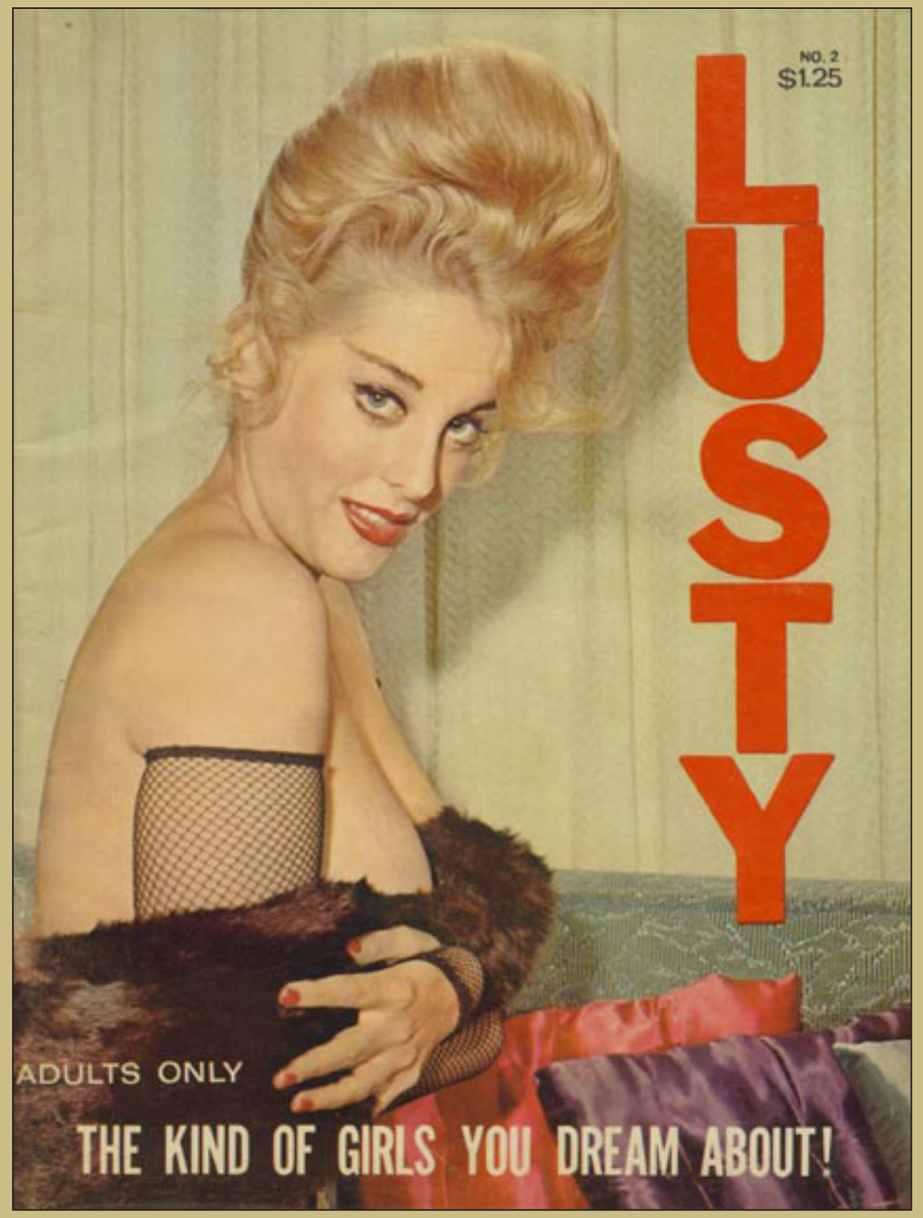
For reasons that clearly had more to do with boosting attendance at the clubs than with any actual talents displayed by the group, Vito and Carl seem to have become minor media darlings over the course of the 1960s and into the 1970s. The two can be seen, separately and together, in a string of cheap exploitation films, including Mondo Bizarro from 1966, Something's Happening (*aka The Hippie Revolt*) from 1967, the notorious Mondo Hollywood, also released in 1967, and You Are What You Eat, with David Crosby, Frank Zappa and Tiny Tim, which hit theaters in 1968. In 1972, Vito made his acting debut in a non-documentary film, The White Horse Gang.

Paulekas reportedly also popped up on Groucho Marx's You Bet Your Life, and Franzoni made an appearance on a 1968 Dick Clark TV special. The golden child, Godot Paulekas, was featured in a photo in Life magazine circa 1966, and the whole troupe showed up for an appearance on the Tonight Show. According to Barry Miles, Vito also "*appeared regularly on the Joe Pyne Show and in between the bare-breasted girls in the late fifties and early sixties men's magazines.*"

the talk show host

Joe Pyne, for those of you too young to remember (*myself included*), is the guy that we have to thank for paving the way for the likes of Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Don Imus, Morton Downey, Jr., Jerry Springer and Wally George. For Mr. Pyne, you see, was the guy who pioneered the confrontational interview style favored by so many gasbags today. The decorated Marine Corps veteran debuted as a talk-radio

host in 1950 and quickly became known for insulting and demeaning anyone who dared to disagree with him, guests and listeners alike. In 1957, he moved his show to LA, and by 1965, he was nationally syndicated both on the radio and on television. His favored targets, as you may have guessed, included hippies, feminists, gays, and anti-war activists, and his interviews frequently ended with his guest either walking off or being thrown off the stage. Nearing the peak of his popularity, Pyne died on March 23, 1970 at the age of forty-five, reportedly of lung cancer. His ideological offspring, however, live on.



4-way sex with goddesses

"Vito was in his fifties, but he had four-way sex with goddesses ... He held these clay-sculpting classes on Laurel Avenue, teaching rich Beverly Hills dowagers how to sculpt. And that was the Byrds' rehearsal room. Then Jim Dickson had the idea to put them on at Ciro's, on the basis that all the freaks would show up and the Byrds would be their Beatles."

– Kim Fowley

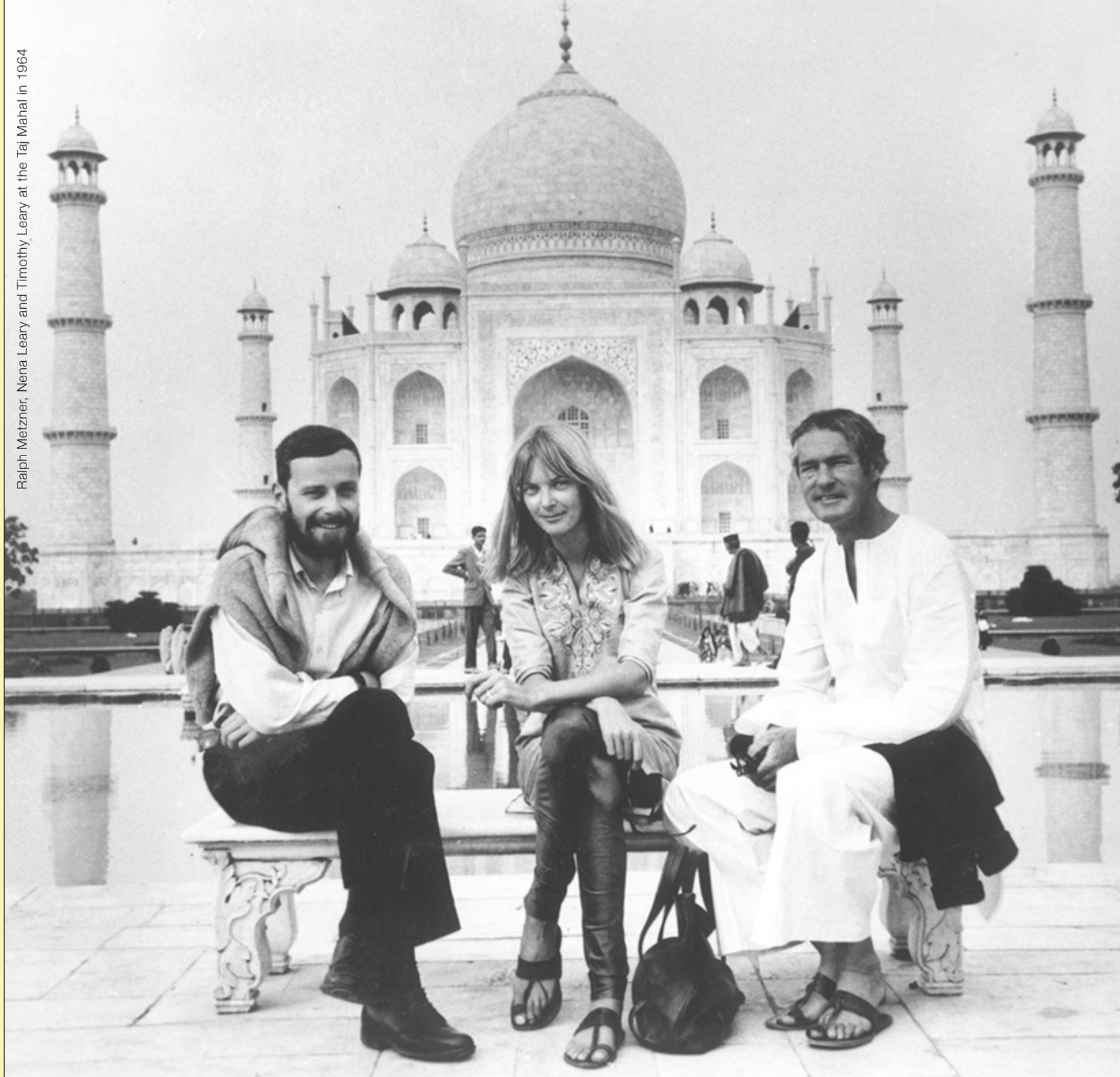
Recruits for Vito and Carl's dance troupe weren't likely hard to come by, given that, according to Miles, Vito operated "*the first crash pad in LA, an open house to countless runaways where everyone was welcome for a night, particularly young women*." By the mid 1960s, the group had expanded into a second communal location in addition to the basement studio at 303 Laurel Avenue: the ubiquitous Log Cabin. According to Jack Boulware, writing in Mojo magazine, architect Robert Byrd and his son built a new guesthouse (*aka 'the treehouse'*) on the property in the early 1960s, and "*The following year, a communal family of weirdos moved into the cabin and treehouse, centered around two underground hipsters named Vito Paulekas and Carl Franzoni, organizers of freeform dance troupes at clubs along the Sunset Strip*." By 1967, the dancers were splitting "*their rent with staff from the hippie publication The Oracle. Retired journalist John Bilby recalls at least 36 people living and partying at the Log Cabin and treehouse, including the band Fraternity of Man. 'Tim Leary was definitely there, George Harrison and Ravi Shankar were there,' Bilby says.*"

tim leary, the cia and the oracle

For those who may not necessarily be 'in the know' about such things, the Fraternity of Man were best known for the novelty song, "*Don't Bogart Me*," Tim Leary was best known for being a painfully obvious CIA asset doling out LSD, and The Oracle was a San Francisco-based publication with intelligence ties that specialized in pitching psychedelic occultism to impressionable youth.

suzy creamcheese

According to Barry Miles, "*Franzoni's commune ended in May 1968*," as that was when The Oracle moved out and our old friend Frank Zappa moved in. The lead Mother "*had visited Karl at the log cabin on a previous trip and realized it was perfect for his needs*." And it was an easy move for Frank, since he was already living in the canyon at the home of Pamela Zarubica (*aka Suzy Creamcheese*) at 8404 Kirkwood Drive, where Zappa had met his new wife, Gail, and where Gail's old kindergarten pal, James Douglas Morrison, was known to occasionally pass the time. Ms. Zarubica/Creamcheese was yet another member of Vito's dance troupe.



Ralph Metzner, Nena Leary and Timothy Leary at the Taj Mahal in 1964

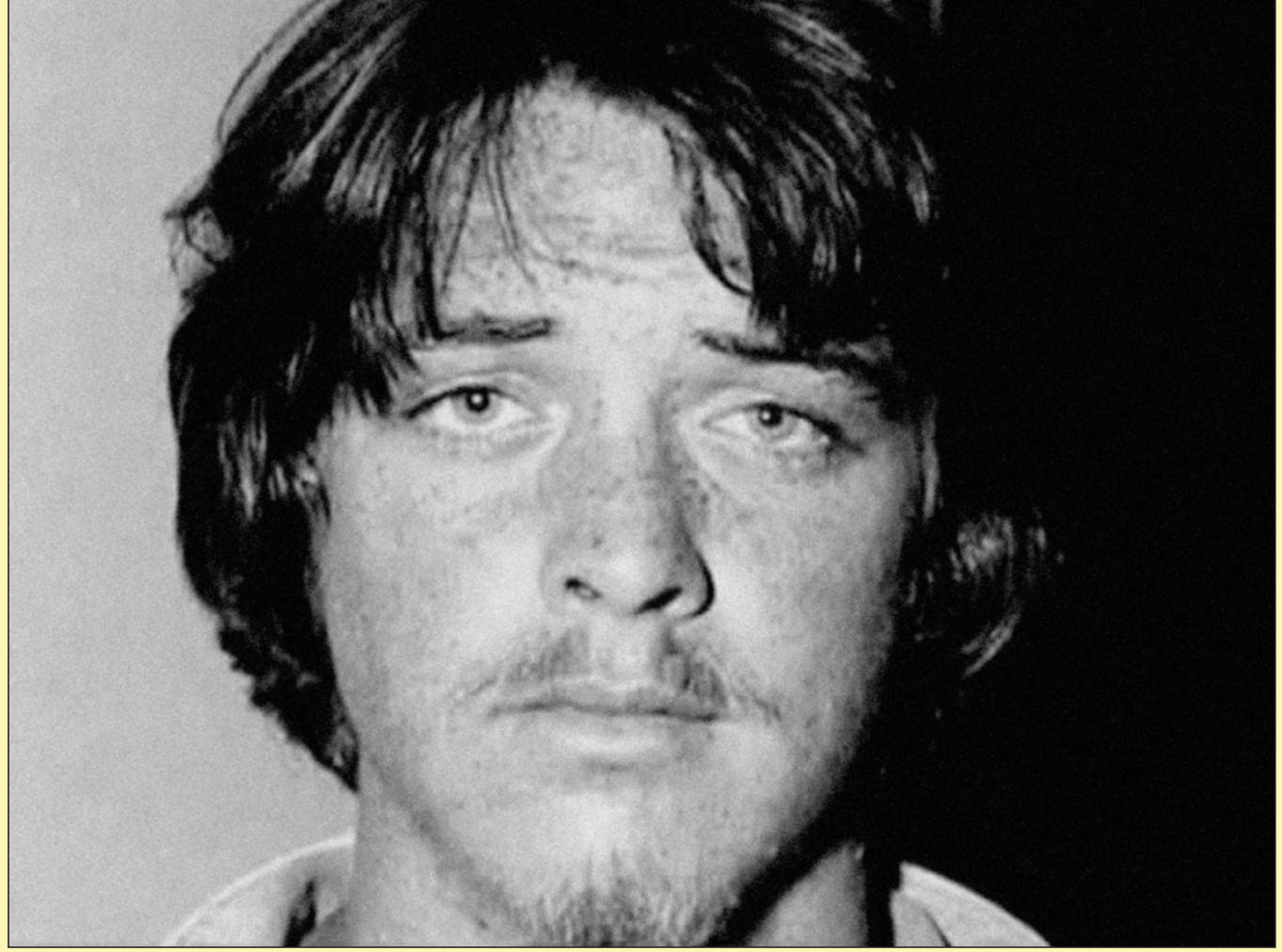
As multiple sources remember it, Miles is mistaken in his contention that Franzoni's commune came to an end; Frank Zappa took over as ringmaster, to be sure, but Franzoni and all his cohorts stayed on. Carl had a room in the basement, where he was known to bowl, usually naked and intoxicated, in the middle of the night. The doomed Christine Frka had a room down there as well, as did other future GTOs. Various other members of the dance troupe occupied other nooks and crannies in both the main house and the guest-house/treehouse. Indeed, as Miles noted correctly, the Freak dancers became so closely associated with the Mothers of Invention that "*they got dubbed as 'the Mothers Auxiliary' and Karl Franzoni, in particular, was included in a lot of group photographs*."

dead at 3

And that, my friends, is the story of Vito's Freakers – or at least a sanitized version. Because there is, as it turns out, a very dark underbelly to this story. And much of it is centered around that angelic hippie child that the readers of Life magazine met in 1966, and who we now must sadly add to the Laurel Canyon Death List. For young Godot Paulekas, you see, never made it past the age of three (by most accounts). The specifics of the tragedy are all but impossible to determine, unfortunately, as there is little agreement in the various accounts of the event. Left unclear is exactly how the child died, when the tragedy occurred, and what age the boy was.

According to Barry Miles, "*Vito and Szou's three-year-old son Godo had fallen through a trapdoor on the roof of the building and died.*" Michael Walker tells of a "*two or three*" year old Godot "*fall[ing] to his death from a scaffold at the studio.*" An article in the San Francisco Weekly had it as "*a 5-year-old boy*" who died when he "*fell through a skylight.*" Super-groupie and former Freak dancer Pamela DesBarres agreed with the skylight scenario, but not the age: "*Vito's exquisite little puppet child, Godot, fell through a skylight during a wacky photo session on the roof and died at age three-and-a-half.*" Alban Pfisterer of the band Love recalled a much darker scenario: "*[Vito] got married, had a baby, gave it acid, and it fell off the roof and died.*"

When Robert Carl Cohen recently digitally remastered his notorious Mondo Hollywood for DVD release, he added postscripts for all the famous and infamous people who were featured in his film. For "*Godo*" Paulekas, he inserted the following caption: "Died age 2 – victim of medical malpractice." Thus we now have a further muddying of the waters. Since Cohen's claim though is so clearly at odds with every other account of the incident, and since he was quite close to Vito and thus inclined to cast his friend in the best possible light, we can probably safely disregard Cohen's belated postscript.



Robert Kenneth "Bobby" Beausoleil

Born November 6, 1947, in Santa Barbara, California, is a convicted American murderer and associate of the Charles Manson "*Family*" who is serving a life sentence. He killed music teacher and fellow associate Gary Hinman on July 27, 1969, and has been imprisoned since his arrest for that crime. He was an aspiring musician and actor at the time that he murdered Hinman.

As described in the book Helter Skelter, Hinman was killed over money and property that Manson claimed Hinman owed the Family. It also served as the first of a series of murders committed by The Family to start Helter Skelter, a "*war*" that Manson had preached to his Family that would happen in the summer of 1969.

Accompanying Beausoleil that night were Susan Atkins and Mary Brunner, both later involved in other murders and crimes. Beausoleil claims that Hinman supplied him with a batch of bad mescaline that Beausoleil in turn sold to the Straight Satans motorcycle gang. When the bikers demanded their money back, Manson ordered Beausoleil to Hinman's residence to get the money. Hinman is said to have refused to pay saying, "*I don't have any money to give you*". Beausoleil called Manson back at Spahn Ranch to tell him that no money was forthcoming. Beausoleil, Atkins, and Brunner then held him captive in his own home in an attempt to convince him to refund the money.

Manson arrived and proceeded to slice off a part of Hinman's ear with a sword; Atkins and Brunner stitched it up with dental floss afterwords. Manson then ordered Beausoleil to kill Hinman and told him to make it look as if the crime had been committed by black revolutionaries, as he had been predicting to his Family that a race war was imminent. Beausoleil stabbed Hinman to death as Hinman chanted a Buddhist chant. Afterwards, he wrote the words "*Political piggy*" on a wall in Hinman's blood in an attempt to lead police to believe the murder was done by a group of radicals. After he wrote the words, Beausoleil dipped his hand in Hinman's blood and left on the wall a paw print, which was the symbol of The Black Panthers, to indicate that the Panthers had murdered Hinman. On August 6, 1969, Beausoleil was arrested while stalled along side the highway in Hinman's Fiat.

At Beausoleil's two trials for the murder, the defense mentioned nothing about the murder being the result of a drug transaction gone wrong. His first revelation of this came in 1981, 12 years after the murders, in an interview published in Oui magazine. In that interview, he denied that Manson had come to the Hinman residence during the event that led to the murder, although he later reversed himself on this detail. This is the version that Beausoleil currently maintains as truth. Also, conspirator Susan Atkins had stated before her death that she never heard any mention by Beausoleil indicating that the reason they went to Hinman's residence had anything to do with a drug transaction. See Helter Skelter (*Manson scenario*) for more details on the murders perpetrated by Charles Manson and members of his Family.

he died today

The details of the incident that can be ascertained are, to put it mildly, rather disturbing. We know, for example, that a musician and writer named Raphael told writer Michael Walker that, before the child's death, he had been present one evening at Vito's place when Godot was brought out: "*They passed that little boy around, naked, in a circle with their mouths. That was their thing about 'introducing him to sensuality.'*" We also know that Vito and Szou had a rather odd reaction to the death of their first-born son and only child, as recounted by Ms. DesBarres: "*I was beside myself with sorrow, but Vito and Szou insisted on continuing our plans for the evening. We went out dancing, and when people asked where little Godot was, Vito said, 'He died today.' It was weird, really weird*."

cupid, draw back your bow

That it was, but perhaps even weirder is the full text of the quote from the San Francisco Weekly that I earlier presented you with an edited version of: "*[Kenneth Anger's] first candidate to play Lucifer, a 5-year-old boy whose hippie parents had been fixtures on the Los Angeles counterculture scene, fell through a skylight to his death. By 1967, Anger had relocated to San Francisco and was searching for a new Lucifer.*" As many readers may be aware, he soon found his new Lucifer in the form of Mansonite and former Grass Roots guitarist Bobby "*Cupid*" Beausoleil.

And so it was that the soon-to-be convicted murderer replaced the cherubic hippie child as the face of Lucifer. But what was it, one wonders, that drew Anger's twisted eye to the young boy? And how close a relationship did Anger have with Paulekas and Franzoni? And most importantly, how did Godot Paulekas really die? We will likely never know for sure, but let's just quickly review some of the factors that might come into play when searching for a solution to this mystery:

• The young boy was reportedly subjected to pedophilic treatment by his parents and others.
• The boy's parents displayed a truly chilling indifference to the child's death.
• Kenneth Anger had expressed an interest in filming the boy.
• Pamela DesBarres contends that the toddler died during a "wacky photo session."
• Alban Pfisterer has claimed that the child was drugged.
• Bobby Beausoleil has said that some of Anger's film projects were for private collectors: "*every once in a while he'd do a little thing that wouldn't be for distribution*."
• Finally, according to biographer Bill Landis, Kenneth Anger was at one time investigated by the police on suspicion that he had been producing snuff flicks.

You all will have to draw your own conclusions on this one. As a responsible journalist, I obviously cannot indulge in any reckless speculation here, and I think we can all agree that I have not tried to lead you in any specific direction, but have merely laid the facts out on the table for your review. Moving on then …

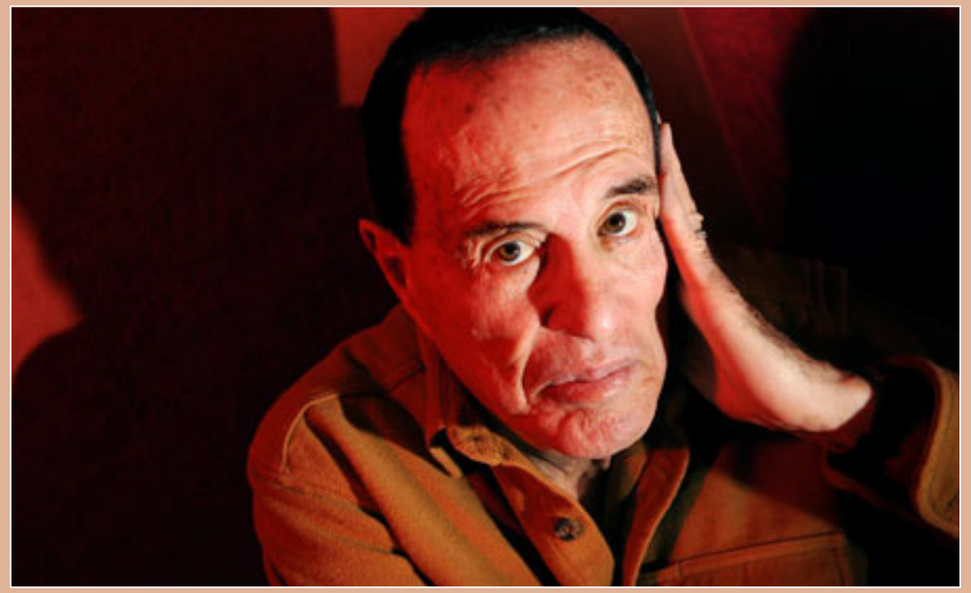
deported

Pamela DesBarres shed further light on the dark edges of the Freak troupe with this description of a scene that Vito had staged one evening in his studio: "*two tenderly young girls were tonguing each other … everyone was silently observing the scene as if it were part of their necessary training by the headmaster, Vito … One of the girls on the four-poster was only twelve years old, and a few months later Vito was deported to Tahiti for this very situation, and many more just like it*."

It was actually Haiti that Vito appears to have fled to, and then to Jamaica (*which at the time had no extradition treaty with the United States*), accompanied by his wife Szou and their new baby daughter Groovee Nipple (*or possibly Gruvi Nipple; does anyone really care which is the proper spelling?*) According to Miles, this occurred in December of 1968, though other accounts vary. Carl Franzoni, meanwhile, became embroiled in some unspecified legal troubles of his own and went into hiding, resurfacing in Canada by some reports. At around that same time, Frank Zappa moved on to yet another location in Laurel Canyon, a high-security home on Woodrow Wilson Drive.

Also at around that same time, according to author Ed Sanders, the Manson Family came calling at the Log Cabin: "*One former Manson family associate claims that a group of four to six family members lived on Laurel Canyon Boulevard in the log cabin house once owned by cowboy-actor Tom Mix. They lived there for a few weeks, in late 1968, in a cave-like hollow in back of the residence.*" According to Franzoni, Manson also came calling at the Vito Clay studio on Laurel Avenue: "*Applebaum took over Vito's place when Vito vacated at Beverly and Laurel. So he inherited all the people that came after that … he was the beginning of the Manson clan. Manson came there because he had heard about Vito but Vito was gone*."

It does not appear as though Vito was actually deported, by the way, but rather that he fled the country in a very Mike Ruppertian fashion to avoid likely prosecution. In any event, it makes perfect sense, in retrospect, that Charlie Manson and his Family came calling just as Vito fled the scene, and that a Mansonite replaced the Freak child as the embodiment of Lucifer. For the truth, you see, is that, in many significant ways, Charles Manson was little more than a younger version of Vito Paulekas.



Kenneth Anger (above) and a March, 2010 interview with Kenneth Anger at the link below.
Kenneth Anger: "No, I am not a Satanist. I was too smart to be involved in badness."

http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/mar/10/kenneth-anger-interview

Consider, if you will, all of the following Mansonesque qualities that Vito (*and to some extent, Carl*) seemed to share:

- Vito appears to have spent a good portion of his younger years in prisons and reform schools, as did, as we all know, Charles Milles Manson.
- Vito considered himself to be a gifted artist and poet, as did our old friend Charlie Manson.
- Vito, according to Miles, "was something of a guru," as was, quite obviously, Chuck Manson.
- Vito surrounded himself with a flock of very young (*often underage*) women, as did Manson.
- Vito was considerably older than his followers, and so too was Charlie.
- When Vito addressed his flock, they listened with rapt attention as though they were being delivered the word of God, as was true with Charlie as well.
- Carl Franzoni was known to wear a black cape and refer to himself as "*Captain Fuck*," while Manson was also partial to black capes and declared himself to be "*the God of Fuck.*"
- Vito is said to have had a virtually insatiable libido, as did, of course, Chuck Manson.
- Vito's flock adopted nicknames to aid in the depersonalization process, as did Charlie's.
- Vito's troupe included a Beverly Hills hairstylist named Sheldon Jaman, while Charlie's included a Beverly Hills hairpiece stylist named Charles Watson.
- Vito believed in introducing children to sexuality at a very young age, while in the Manson Family, as Sanders has noted, "*Infant sexuality was encouraged*."
- Vito apparently liked to stage live sex shows for his followers, usually involving underage participants, which was also a specialty of Charles Milles Manson.
- Finally, Vito encouraged his followers to drug themselves while he himself largely abstained, thus enabling him to at all times maintain control, while Manson limited his own drug intake for the very same reason.

black capes

Franzoni and Manson were not, by the way, the only folks on the Laurel Canyon/Sunset Strip scene who developed a fondness for black capes in the latter half of the 1960s. As Michael Walker noted in Laurel Canyon, during that same period of time David Crosby had "*taken to wearing an Oscar Wilde/Frank Lloyd Wright-ish cape wherever he went*."

In unrelated news, Ed Sanders notes in The Family that, "*Around March 10, 1968, a convoy of seven Process automobiles containing thirty people and fourteen Alsatian dogs journeyed toward Los Angeles.*" Vincent Bugliosi added, in his best-selling Helter Skelter, that in "*1968 and 1969, The Process launched a major recruiting drive in the United States. They were in Los Angeles in May and June of 1968 and for at least several months in the fall of 1969.*" The Processians, it should be noted, were instantly recognizable on the streets of LA due to the fact that they had a curious habit of donning black capes wherever they went.

saving water

In other news, it appears as though Frank Zappa also displayed some of the same less-than-admirable qualities shared by Manson and Paulekas. As DesBarres observed, "*Vito was just like Frank, he never got high either. They were both ringmasters who always wanted to be in control*." And as Barry Miles noted in his Zappa biography, Frank's daughter Moon "*recalls men with straggling beards, body odour and bad posture who crouched naked near her playthings ...*" Also, the "*Zappa children watched porn with their parents and were encouraged in their own sexuality as soon as they reached puberty. When they became teenagers, Gail insisted they shower with their overnight guests in order to conserve water.*" Because, you know, apparently the Zappas were having a hard time paying their water bill.

By the early 1970s, Vito Paulekas had resurfaced up north in Cotati, California, with Carl Franzoni once again at his side. The two were, by all accounts, treated like rock stars in the funky little town, and they are to this day proudly and prominently featured on the city's official website. By some accounts, Vito even served as mayor of the town, with Franzoni assisting as his Director of Parks and Recreation. Paulekas also taught classes at Sonoma State College, presumably in the art department. Szou eventually split from Vito and went to work for an attorney, leaving the hippie life (*and hopefully the "Z" in her name*) behind. Franzoni, meanwhile, turned up now and then on that early version of America's Got Talent known as The Gong Show (*apparently as one of the 'Worm Dancers'*).

The Gong Show, of course, was the brainchild of Chuck Barris, who famously claimed that during the days when he appeared to be working as a mild-mannered game show producer, he was actually on the payroll of the CIA, and that while he was ostensibly serving as a chaperone to the couples who had won trips on The Dating Game, what he was really doing was carrying out assassinations. Kind of like, I guess you could say, that Harry Houdini guy. One reader, by the way, insists that "*Chucky Baby*" was at one time a resident of – guess where? – Laurel Canyon (*though I have not been able to confirm that*).

Anyway, during those same 1970s, "*The cabin and treehouse scene*," according to Jack Boulware, "*grew creepy.*" Actually, it had always been pretty creepy, it likely just became a little more openly creepy. Eric Burden of the Animals moved in after Zappa vacated and the property continued to be communally occupied. In fact, it appears to have remained something of a commune throughout the 1970s, quite possibly right up until the time that it burned to the ground on October 31, 1981. Who paid the rent is anybody's guess – as is why such a prestigious property seems to have been made available for dirt cheap to pretty much any "*communal family of weirdos*" who wanted to move in.

Vito Paulekas and Carl Franzoni appear to have remained in northern California throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. Franzoni was still milling about the area as recently as 2002. In February of this year, the aging Freak, now reportedly 74, rode along on a tour of 1960s hotspots offered by a local tour company and delighted the crowd by reenacting his distinctive dance style in front of Vito's former studio. The tour operator billed Franzoni as "*the King of the Freaks,*" a title formerly held by his mentor, Vito Paulekas. The original king, alas, had died in October of 1992. His memorial service was held, appropriately enough, on October 31, 1992.

"As all halfway-decent managers in the rock era have done, [Jim] Dickson worked on seducing the in-crowd and creating a buzz around [The Byrds] ... The timing was perfect ... LA's baby-boomers were mobile, getting around, looking for action. And now they were joined by the hip elite of Hollywood itself, from Sal Mineo and Peter Fonda to junkie comic Lenny Bruce."
-Barney Hoskyns, Waiting for the Sun

As important as the Freaks were to building an audience for the new Laurel Canyon bands, there was another group that played a key role as well: Hollywood's so-called "*Young Turks*." Like the Freaks, the Turks became an immediate and constant presence on the newly emerging Sunset Strip scene. And as with the Freaks, their presence on the Strip was heavily promoted by the media. Locals and tourists alike knew where to go to gawk at the Freaks and, as an added bonus, quite possibly rub shoulders with the likes of Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, Dennis Hopper and Warren Beatty, along with their female counterparts like Jane Fonda, Nancy Sinatra and Sharon Tate.

Many of these young and glamorous Hollywood stars forged very close bonds with the Laurel Canyon musicians. Some of them, including Peter Fonda, found homes in the canyon so that they could live, work and party among the rock stars (*and, in their free time, pass around John Phillips' wife to just about every swinging dick in the canyon, including Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper, Warren Beatty, Roman Polanski, and Gene Clark of The Byrds*). Some of them never left; Jack Nicholson to this day lives in a spacious estate just off the portion of Mulholland Drive that lies between Laurel Canyon and Coldwater Canyon. Not far west of Nicholson's property (*which now includes the neighboring estate formerly owned by Marlon Brando*) sits the longtime home of Warren Beatty.

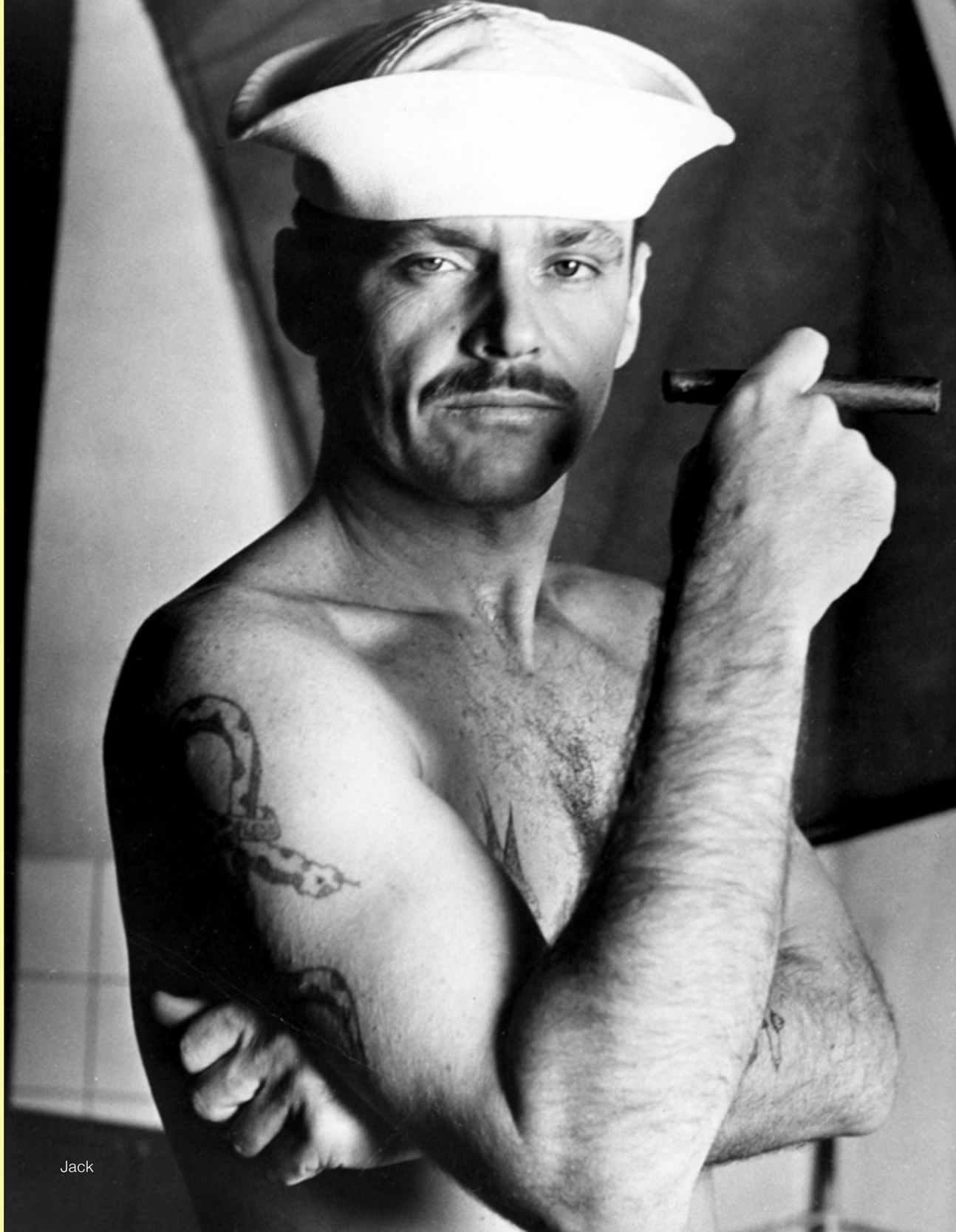
From the symbiotic relationship between Laurel Canyon actors and Laurel Canyon musicians arose a series of feature films that are now considered counter-cultural classics. One such film was 1967's The Trip, an unintentionally hilarious attempt to create a cinematic facsimile of an LSD trip. Written by, of all people, Jack Nicholson, the movie starred fellow Turks Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Bruce Dern. Seated in the director's chair was Roger Corman, who, throughout his career, worked side-by-side with David Crosby's dad on no less than twenty-three feature films. Recruited to supply the soundtrack for the film was Gram Parson's International Submarine Band (*Parson's music, however, was ultimately not used, though the band does make a brief on-screen appearance*). The house where most of the film was shot, at the top of Kirkwood Drive in Laurel Canyon, was the home of Love's Arthur Lee.

Another 'psychedelic' cult film of the late 1960s with deep roots in Laurel Canyon was the Monkee's 1968 big-screen offering, Head. Also scripted by Nicholson (*with assistance from Bob Rafelson*), the movie included cameo appearances by canyon dwellers Dennis Hopper, Jack Nicholson and Frank Zappa. The music – performed, of course, by The Monkees – was a mix of songs written by the band and contributions from Canyon songwriters like Carol King and Harry Nilsson. And shockingly, some of that music is actually pretty good. Even more shockingly, the movie overall is arguably the most watchable of the 1960s cult films. It is certainly a vast improvement over, for example, 1968's wretched Psych Out (*starring Nicholson and Dern*).

casting call for monkees

I do realize, by the way, that some of you out there in readerland cringe every time that I mention The Monkees as though they were a '*real*' band. The reality though is that they were every bit as '*real*' as most of their contemporaries. And while the made-for-TV Beatles replicants were looked down upon by music critics and fans alike, they were fully accepted as members of the musical fraternity by the other Laurel Canyon bands. The homes of both Mickey Dolenz and Peter Tork were popular canyon hangouts in the late '60s for a number of '*real*' musicians. Also regularly dropping by Dolenz' party house were Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson.

The difference in perception between their peers and the public was attributable to the fact that the other bands


Jack

knew something that the fans did not: the very same studio musicians who appeared without credit on The Monkee's albums also appeared without credit on their albums. And then, of course, there was the fact that so many of Laurel Canyon's '*real*' musicians had taken a stab at being a part of The Monkees, including Steven Stills, Love's Bryan MacLean, and Three Dog Night's Danny Hutton – all of whom answered the Monkees' casting call and were rejected.

making marcia brady swoon

There were undoubtedly other future stars who auditioned for the show as well, though most would probably prefer not to discuss such things. Despite persistent rumors, however, there was one local musician who we can safely conclude did not read for a part: Charles Manson. Given that the show was cast in 1965 and began its brief television run in 1966, while Charlie was still imprisoned at Terminal Island awaiting his release in March of 1967, there doesn't appear to be any way that Manson could have been considered for a part on the show. And that's kind of a shame when you think about it, because if he had been, we might today remember Charlie Manson not as one of America's most notorious criminals, but rather as the guy who made Marcia Brady swoon.

And, let's be honest here, would that really have been any worse than seeing her go ga-ga over the likes of Davy Jones? I mean, I could have understood if she had gotten weak in the knees over, you know, a real man like David Cassidy or Bobby Sherman. Now, I hope we can all agree that those guys were cool … right? Is everyone with me on this? Anyone? … Anyone? …

You know, I'm thinking back right now as I sit here, and I can actually picture in my mind the covers of a couple of Bobby Sherman albums that I had in my personal coll … err, that we had lying around the house for some reason, I'm not really sure why, and … come to think of it, I think there might have even been a Bobby Sherman poster or two pulled from the pages of Tiger Beat magazine, and, uhmm, I suppose I can see how that might seem a little bit, uhhh, what's the word I'm looking for? … 'gay' or whatever to a modern, twenty-first-century-man-about-town, but I'm sure that, if you checked into it, you would find that there were a lot of young boys back '*in the day*' who just really dug Bobby Sherman and those great songs like "*Julie (Do You Love Me)*" and "*Easy Come, Easy Go*" and … uhmm … maybe this is a good time to get back to where we left off.

easy rider

Returning then to the counter-cultural films of the 1960s, the most critically acclaimed of the lot, and the one with the deepest roots in Laurel Canyon, was Easy Rider. Directed (*sort of*) by Dennis Hopper, from a script co-written by he and Peter Fonda, the film starred Fonda and Hopper along with Jack Nicholson (*the only one in the movie who did anything resembling actual acting*). Hopper's walrus-mustachioed character in the film was based on David Crosby, who was regularly seen racing his motorcycle up and down the winding streets of Laurel Canyon (*that motorcycle, by the way, had been a gift from Crosby's good buddy, Peter Fonda*). Fonda's absurd '*Captain America*' character was inspired either by John Phillips' riding partner, Gram Parsons, or by Crosby's former bandmate in The Byrds, Roger McGuinn (*depending upon who is telling the story*). That very same Roger McGuinn scored the original music for the film. His contributions were joined on the soundtrack by offerings from fellow Canyonite musicians The Byrds, Steppenwolf, Fraternity of Man and Jimi Hendrix. And the movie's hippie commune was reportedly created and filmed in the canyons, near Mulholland Drive.

Since Easy Rider had such deep roots in the Laurel Canyon scene, we need to briefly focus our attention here on one other individual who worked on the film: art director Jeremy Kay, aka Jerry Kay. Before Easy Rider, Kay had worked on such cinematic abominations as Angels from Hell, Hells Angels on Wheels (*with Jack Nicholson*), and Scorpio Rising (*Kenneth Anger's occult-tinged homage to gay bikers*). In the mid-1970s, Kay would write, direct

scene from "Easy Rider"

and produce a charming little film entitled Satan's Children. Of far more interest here than his film credits though is his membership in the 1960s in a group known as the Solar Lodge of the Ordo Templi Orientis (or OTO), which found itself in the news, and not in a good way, just after Easy Rider opened on theater screens across America.

oto - ordo templi orientis

Two weeks after Easy Rider premiered on July 14, 1969, police acting on a phone tip raided the Solar Lodge's compound near Blythe, California and found a six-year-old boy locked outdoors in a 6'x6' wooden crate in the sweltering desert heat. The young boy, whose father was a Los Angeles County probation officer (*as was Michelle Phillip's father, by the way*), had been chained to a steel plate for nearly two months in temperatures reaching as high as 117° F. According to an FBI report, the box also contained a can "*partially filled with human waste and swarming with flies … The stench was nauseating*." Before being put in the box, the child had been burned with matches and beaten with bamboo poles by cult members. The leader of the cult, Georgina Brayton, had reportedly told cult members that "*when it was convenient, she was going to give [the boy] LSD and set fire to the structure in which he was chained and give him just enough chain to get out of reach of the fire*." Killing the child had also been discussed (*and apparently condoned by the boy's mind-fucked mother*).

Eleven adult members of the sect were charged with felony child abuse, the majority of them young white men in their early twenties. All were brought to trial and convicted. In a curious bit of timing, the raid that resulted in the arrests and convictions coincided with the torture and murder of musician Gary Hinman by a trio of Manson acolytes. Though it is, not surprisingly, vehemently denied by concerned parties, various sources have claimed that Manson had ties to the group, which also maintained a home near the USC campus in Los Angeles. There is no doubt that Charlie preached the same dogma, including the notion of an apocalyptic race war looming on the horizon. The massacre at the Tate residence occurred less than two weeks after the raid on the OTO compound. Manson's Barker Ranch hideout would be raided a few months later, on October 12, 1969 – the birthday, as I may have already mentioned, of Aleister Crowley, the Grand Poobah of the OTO until his death in 1947.

dern

Sorry about that little digression, folks. I'm not entirely sure how we ended up at the Barker Ranch when the focus of this installment was supposed to be on the Young Turks. So having now established that those Turks were a fully integrated part of the Laurel Canyon/Sunset Strip scene, and also that they played an important role in luring the public out to the new clubs to check out the new bands, our next task is to get to know a little bit about who these folks are and where they came from. Let's begin with Mr. Bruce Dern, who has some of the most provocative connections of any of the characters in this story.

skull and bones

It is probably safe to say that Dern's parents had rather impressive political connections, given that baby Bruce's godparents were sitting First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and future two-time Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson (*he lost both times, in 1952 and 1956, to Eisenhower*). Bruce's paternal grandfather was a guy by the name of George Dern, who served as Secretary of War under President Franklin Roosevelt (*for the youngsters in the crowd, 'Secretary of War' is what we used to call the 'Secretary of Defense' in a slightly less Orwellian era*). George had also served as Governor of Utah and Chairman of the National Governors' Association. Bruce's mother was born Jean MacLeish, and she happened to be the sister of Archibald MacLeish, who also served under Franklin Roosevelt, as the Director of the War Department's Office of Facts and Figures and as the Assistant Director of the Office of War Information. In other words, Archibald MacLeish was essentially America's Minister of War Propaganda. He also served at various times as an Assistant Secretary of State and as the Librarian of Congress. By far the most impressive item on his résumé, however, was his membership in everyone's favorite secret society, Skull and Bones (*class of 1915, one year before Prescott Bush was tapped in 1916*).

It would appear then that, even by Laurel Canyon standards, Mr. Dern has friends in very high places. Let's turn our attention next to Mr. Peter Fonda. Of course, we all know that Fonda is the son of good ol' Hank Fonda, lovable Hollywood liberal and all-around nice guy. And certainly even a contrarian such as myself would not be so bold as to suggest that Henry Fonda might have some skeletons in his closet … right? Just for the hell of it though, there are a few chapters of the Hank Fonda saga that we should probably review here.

us naval intelligence

We can begin, I suppose, by noting that Hank served as a decorated US Naval Intelligence officer during World War II, thus sparing Peter the stigma of being the only member of the Laurel Canyon in-crowd to have not been spawned by a member of the military/intelligence community. Not too many years after the war, Hank's wife, Francis Ford Seymour, was found with her throat slashed open with a straight razor. Peter was just ten years old at the time of his mother's, uhmm, suicide on April 14, 1950. When Seymour had met and married Hank, she was the widow of George Brokaw, who had, curiously enough, previously been married to prominent CIA asset Claire Booth Luce.

even the rothschilds get to play

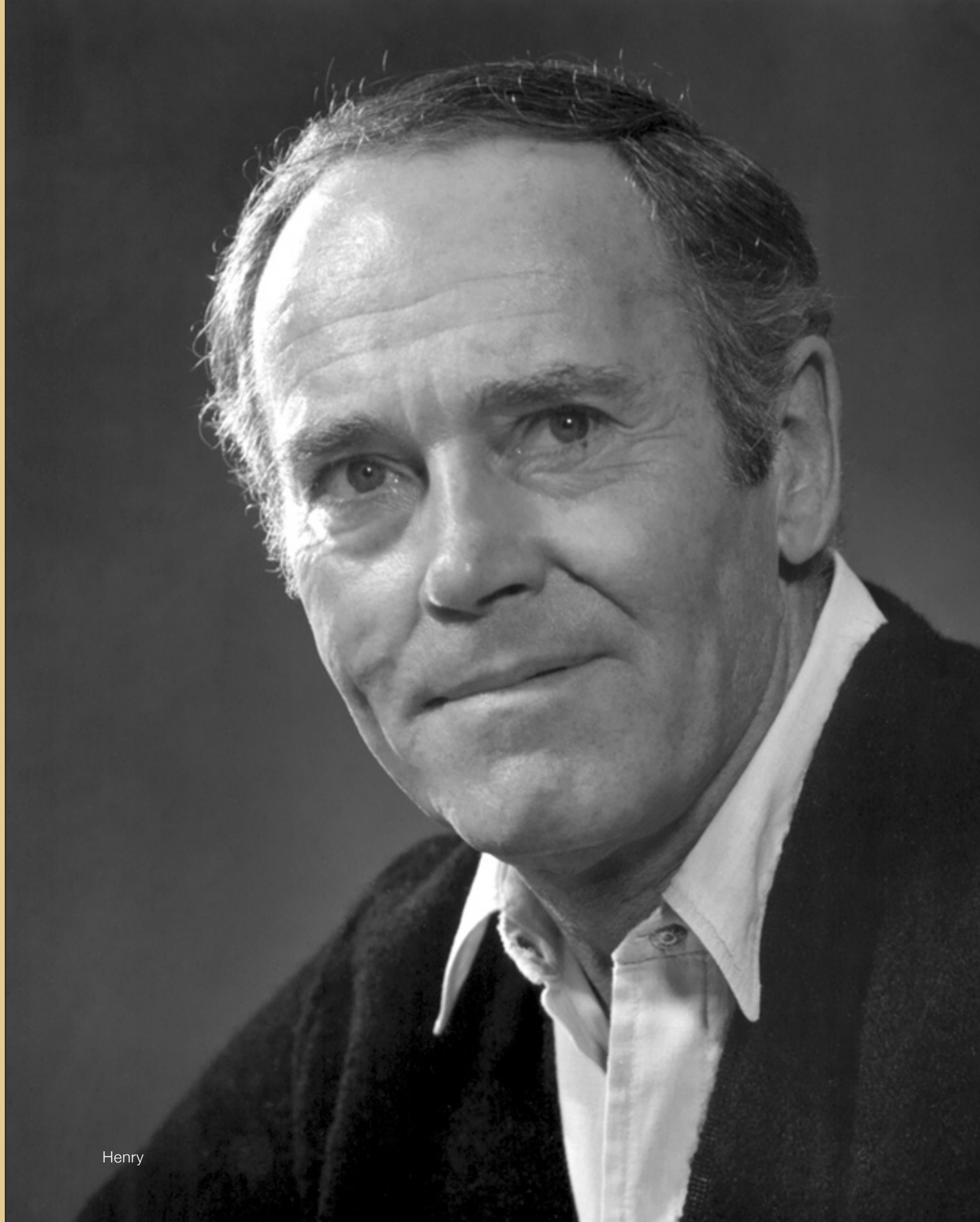
Fonda rebounded quickly from Seymour's unusual death and within eight months he was married once again, to Susan Blanchard, to whom he remained married until 1956. In 1957, Hank married yet again, this time to Italian Countess Afdera Franchetti (*who followed up her four-year marriage to Fonda with a rumored affair with newly-sworn-in President John Kennedy*). Franchetti, as it turns out, is the daughter of Baron Raimondo Franchetti, who was a consultant to fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. The countess is also the great-granddaughter of Louise Sarah Rothschild, of the ever-popular Rothschild banking family (*perhaps you've heard of them?*)

handcuffed and imprisoned with two suicides

Before moving on, I should probably mention that Hank's first wife, Margaret Sullavan – who was yet another child of Norfolk, Virginia – also allegedly committed suicide, on New Year's Day, 1960. Nine months later, her daughter Bridget followed suit. In 1961, very soon after the deaths of first her mother and then her sister, Sullavan's other daughter, Brook Hayward, walked down the aisle with the next Young Turk on our list, Dennis Hopper. For those who may be unfamiliar with Hopper's body of work, he is the guy who was once found wandering naked and bewildered in a Mexican forest. And the guy who, after divorcing Hayward in 1969, married Michelle Phillips on Halloween day, 1970, only to have her file for divorce just eight days later claiming that Hopper had kept her handcuffed and imprisoned for a week while making "*unnatural sexual demands*."

Without passing judgment here, I think it's fair to say that Michelle Phillips has been around the block a time or two, if you catch my drift, so if even she thought Hopper's demands were a bit over the top, then one can only wonder just how "*unnatural*" they might have been. For what it's worth, Hopper just recently told a journalist that he "*didn't handcuff her, [he] just punched her out!*" In his mind, apparently, that makes him somewhat less of an asshole.

Most official biographies of Hopper would lead one to believe that he was the son of a simple farmer. Dennis recently acknowledged, however, that that was clearly not the case: "*My mother's father was a wheat farmer and I was raised on their farm. But my father was not a farmer*." To the contrary, Hopper's dad was "*a working person in intelligence*" who during WWII "*was in the OSS. He was in China, Burma, India*." Hopper has proudly proclaimed that his father "*was one of the 100 guys that liberated General Wainright out of prison in Korea*," which might be a little more impressive were it not for the fact that it was actually the Red Army that freed Wainright and other prisoners; the US intel team just came to pick them up, debrief them and transport them home … but that, I suppose, isn't really relevant.



Henry

After the war, according to Hopper, his dad carried a gun, which I suppose is what most lay ministers in the Methodist Church do. The family also left the farm in Kansas and relocated to San Diego, California, home of the Imperial Beach Naval Air Station, the United States Naval Radio Station, the United States Naval Amphibious Base, the North Island Naval Air Station, Fort Rosecrans Military Reservation, the United States Naval Training Center, the United States Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station. And just north of the city sits the massive Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. Other than that though, San Diego is just a sleepy little beach town where Hopper's dad ostensibly worked for the Post Office.

The modern version of Dennis Hopper, by the way, is wildly at odds with the hippie image that he at one time tried very hard to cultivate. Today's Dennis Hopper is an unapologetic cheerleader for Team Bush who proudly boasts of having voted a straight Republican ticket for nearly thirty years.

To briefly recap then, we have thus far met three of the 'Young Turks' and we have found that one of them is the nephew of a Bonesman, another is the son of a Naval Intelligence officer who was once married to a Rothschild descendent, and the third is the slightly deranged son of an OSS officer. Come to think of it, we have actually covered one of the 'Turkettes' as well, since Jane Fonda obviously came from the same family background as her younger brother, Peter. As for the other female members of the posse, Sharon Tate was the daughter of Lt. Col. Paul Tate, a career US Army intelligence officer, and Nancy Sinatra is, of course, the daughter of Francis Albert Sinatra, whose known associates included Lucky Luciano, Meyer Lansky, Sam Giancana, Carlo Gambino, Goetano Luchese and Joseph Fishetti (a cousin of Al Capone).

clients, clients, clients ...

Frank Sinatra was also a client of hairdresser-to-the-stars Jay Sebring, as was Henry Fonda, who also at one time, strangely enough, lived in the guesthouse at 10050 Cielo Drive. Yet another client of Sebring's was the next Young Turk on our list, Warren Beatty, whose father, Ira Owens Beatty, was ostensibly a professor of psychology. Young Warren, however, spent all of his early years living in various spooky suburbs of Washington, DC. He was born in Richmond, Virginia in 1937, after which his father moved the family to Norfolk, Virginia, which I think I may have mentioned is home to the world's largest Naval facility (*the reason for that, by the way, is that Norfolk is the gateway to the nation's capital*). The family later relocated to Arlington, Virginia, home of the Pentagon, where Warren attended high school and where he was known on the football field, as John Phillips (*who attended a rival school*) remembers it, as '*Mad Dog*' Beatty.

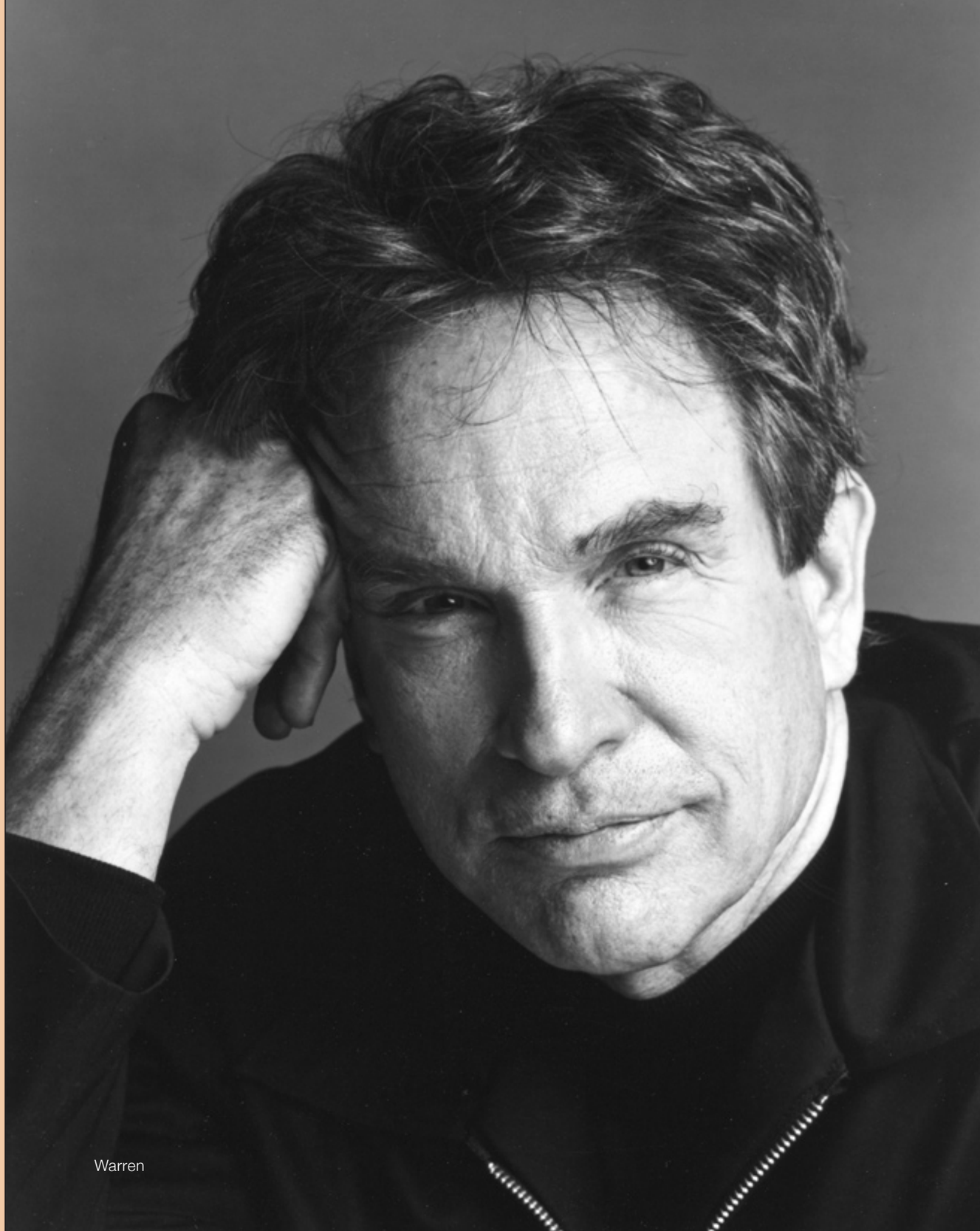
frequent relocations and mk-ultra

Ira Beatty's relatively frequent relocations, and the fact that those relocations always seemed to land the family in DC suburbs that are of considerable significance to the military/intelligence community, would tend to indicate that Warren's dad was something other than what he appeared to be – though that is, of course, a speculative assessment. But if Ira Beatty was on the payroll of some government entity, working within the psychology departments of various DC-area universities, then it wouldn't require a huge leap of faith to further speculate about what type of work he was doing, given the wholesale co-opting of the field of psychology by the MK-ULTRA program and affiliated projects.

the birth of a star

The next Young Turk up for review is the one who went on to become arguably the most acclaimed actor of his generation, Mr. Jack Nicholson. The following is a biographical sketch of Nicholson as presented by Wikipedia:

"*Bundy was born at the Elizabeth Lund Home for Unwed Mothers in Burlington, Vermont. The identity of his father remains a mystery ... To avoid social stigma, Bundy's grandparents Samuel and Eleanor Cowell claimed*



Warren

him as their son; in taking their last name, he became Theodore Robert Cowell. He grew up believing his mother Eleanor Louise Cowell to be his older sister. Bundy biographers Stephen Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth state that he learned Louise was actually his mother while he was in high school. True crime writer Ann Rule states that it was around 1969, shortly following a traumatic breakup with his college girlfriend."

Uhhm … hang on a minute … I think I might have screwed up. Something doesn't seem quite right, but I'm not exactly sure what …. Oh, shit! I see what I did wrong! I accidentally cut and pasted '*serial killer*' Ted Bundy's bio instead of Jack Nicholson's. Sorry about that. This is how Jack's bio is supposed to read:

"*Nicholson was born at some indeterminate location to an underage, unwed showgirl. The identity of his father remains a mystery ... To avoid social stigma, Nicholson's grandparents John Joseph and Ethel Nicholson claimed him as their son; in taking their last name, he became John Joseph Nicholson, Jr. He grew up believing his mother June Francis Nicholson to be his older sister. Reporters state that he learned June was actually his mother in 1974, when he was 37 years old. By then, June had been dead for just over a decade, having only lived to the age of 44.*"

It is said that Nicholson was born at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City, but there is no record of such a birth at the hospital or in the city's archives. As it turns out, Jack Nicholson has no birth certificate. Until 1954, by which time he was nearly an adult, he did not officially exist. Even today, the closest thing he has to a birth certificate is a '*Certificate of a Delayed Report of Birth*' that was filed on May 24, 1954. The document lists John and Ethel Nicholson as the parents and identifies the location of the birth as the Nicholson's home address in Neptune, New Jersey.

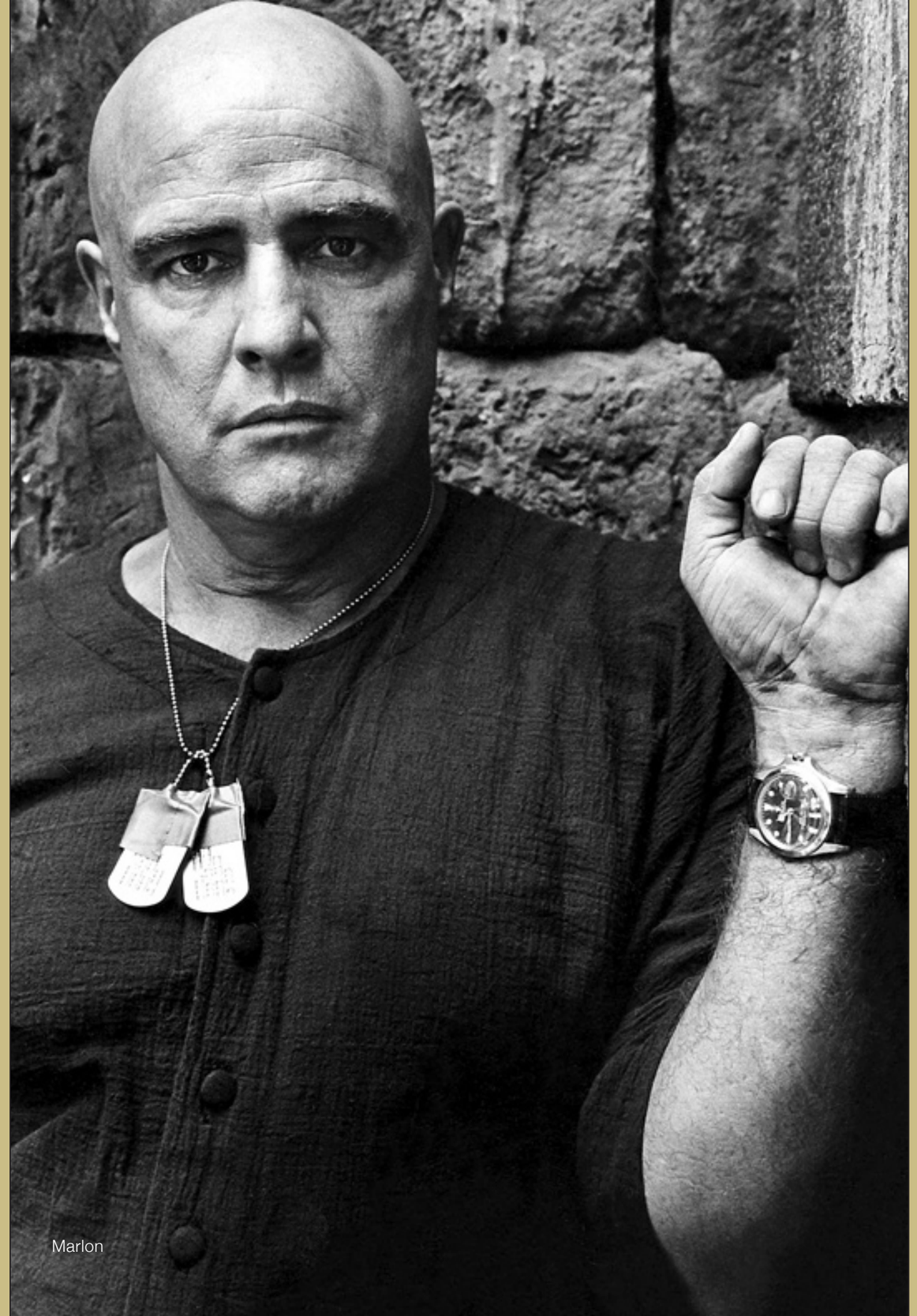
who was that masked man?

It appears then that there is no way to determine who Jack Nicholson really is. He has told journalists that he has no interest in identifying who his father was, nor, it would appear, in verifying his mother's identity. What we do know is that the nucleus of the 1960s clique known as the Young Turks (*and Turkettes*) was composed of the following individuals: the nephew of a Bonesman; the son of an OSS officer; the son of a Naval intelligence officer; the daughter of that same Naval intelligence officer; the daughter of an Army intelligence officer; the daughter of a guy who openly associated with prominent gangsters throughout his life; the son of a probable spychologist; and a guy whose early years are so shrouded in mystery that he may or may not actually exist.

I should probably also mention here that Henry Fonda scored his first acting gig through Dorothy "*Dodie*" Brando, the director of a local theater and the mother of Jack Nicholson's future neighbor, Marlon Brando. Being the small world that it is, Marlon's mom happened to be a good friend of Hank's mom, Elma Fonda. Truth be told, the families had likely had close ties for a long time. A very long time. The ancestors of both Marlon Brando and Henry Fonda, you see, arrived in New York at nearly the same time, roughly three-and-a-half centuries ago.

Marlon Brando is in a direct line of descent from French Huguenot colonists Louis DuBois and Catharine Blanchan DuBois, who arrived in New York from Mannheim, Germany circa 1660 and promptly founded New Rochelle. Other descendents of DuBois include former U.S. Senator Leverett Saltonstall, former Massachusetts Governor and CFR member William Weld, current California First Lady Maria Shriver, and quite likely U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Zachary Taylor.

Henry Fonda, on the other hand, is a direct descendent of Jellis Douw Fonda and Hester Jans Fonda, Dutch colonists who arrived in New York circa 1650 and settled near what would become Albany. The Fondas had sailed out of Friesland, Netherlands on a ship dubbed the Valckenier, which happened to be co-owned by a very wealthy Dutchman by the name of Jan-Baptist van Rensselaer. And Mr. van Rensselaer, as those who have been paying attention in class will recall, happened to be from the bloodline that would one day produce a guy by the name of David van Cortland Crosby.



Marlon

It would appear then that Peter Fonda kind of owed Crosby that Triumph motorcycle that he gave him back in the '60s, what with David's ancestors having been cool enough to give Peter's ancestors a lift over to the New World and all.

One other thing we could note here about Hank Fonda before wrapping up this installment: on September 28, 1919, when Henry was just fourteen years old, he bore witness to a crime so brutally sadistic and depraved that one wonders what such an event would do to a young boy's psyche. According to an account published at the time, a young black man named Will Brown, accused of raping a white girl, was beaten unconscious by an angry mob. His clothes were then torn off and he was hanged from a lamppost. Though quite dead, his corpse was then riddled with bullets, after which he was cut down and dragged behind a car. His body was then doused with fuel and burned. Following that, Mr. Brown's charred, battered, bullet-ridden corpse was proudly dragged through the streets of downtown. To commemorate the event, the lynch rope was cut into small pieces that were sold for 10 cents each to eager buyers.

And that, my friends, is a snapshot of the sick society we live in … but here, perhaps, I have digressed.

Let's wrap up this installment with a quick review of what we have learned about the people populating Laurel Canyon in the mid-to-late 1960s. We know that one subset of residents was a large group of musicians who all decided, nearly simultaneously, to flood into the canyon. The most prominent members of this group were, to an overwhelming degree, the sons and daughters of the military/intelligence community. We also know that mingled in with them were the young stars of Hollywood, who also were, to an astonishing degree, the sons and daughters of the military/intelligence community. And, finally, we know that also in the mix were scores of military/intelligence personnel who operated out of the facility known as Lookout Mountain Laboratory.

I got to tell you here folks that, given the relatively small size of Laurel Canyon, I'm beginning to wonder if there was any room left over for any normal folks who might have wanted to live the rock 'n' roll lifestyle. But even so, I'm sure that there are still some hardcore 'coincidence theorists' in the crowd who will still see all of this as "much ado about nothing." I am committed though to helping those folks see the light, no matter how much it might hurt their sensitive eyes, so I am going to toss one more provocative element into the Laurel Canyon mix, courtesy of Paul Young's L.A. Exposed:

"The most infamous male madam [throughout LA's sordid history] would have to be Billy Bryars, the wealthy son of an oil magnate, and part-time producer of gay porn. Bryars was said to have a stellar group of customers using his 'brothel' at the summit of Laurel Canyon. In fact, some have claimed that none other than J. Edgar Hoover, the founder and chief executive officer of the FBI, was one of his best clients … when Bryars fell under police scrutiny in 1973, allegedly for trafficking in child pornography, officers obtained a number of confessions from some of his hustlers, and some of them identified Hoover and [Clyde] Tolson as 'Mother John and Uncle Mike,' and claimed that they had serviced them on numerous occasions."

It appears then that the top law-enforcement officials in the nation were also a part of the Laurel Canyon scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s, along with various other unnamed persons of prominence. And we also find, not too shockingly at this point, that Laurel Canyon was a portal of child pornography, which of course goes hand-in-hand with the reports that we have already reviewed of organized, multi-perpetrator child sexual abuse. And lest we forget, we also have that long and bloody Laurel Canyon Death List, which, in the next installment, is going to get even longer, and even bloodier.

Stay tuned …

And now, faithful readers, allow me to address a few common questions that have arisen, beginning with:

Why isn't this a book?

The reason that I chose to present this material via the Internet is so that all of you can help to insure that the story is told as accurately as possible. This is, in a sense, a collaborative effort. Though I am willing to do most of the heavy lifting, I am relying on all of you to point out any gaffes or omissions. In other words, this is very much a work in progress and I have already made some minor corrections in previous posts thanks to feedback from readers.

Thanks to one particularly helpful reader who has access to California's Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Indexes, as well as U.S. Census information, we now know a little more about the Paulekas clan than we did before. Vitautas Alfonso Paulekas was born on May 20, 1913 in Massachusetts, the son of John and Rose Paulekas. He had one older sister, Albena, and two younger brothers, Bronislo and John. Vito married Szou (real name Sueanne C. Shaffer) on July 7, 1961, when he was 48 and she was just 18. If they met when she was 16, as seems quite probable, then Vito was 46 at the time, rather than in his fifties as previously reported.

By far the most interesting information to surface concerns young Godo Paulekas. Born on December 1, 1963, Godo died on December 23, 1966, having just made it past his third birthday. December 23 was, curiously enough, the winter solstice (*or very close to it*). And it wasn't just any winter solstice, mind you, but specifically the first winter solstice in the Age of Satan (*as declared by Kenneth Anger's buddy, Anton LaVey, on April 30, 1966*). The date of his death also means that young Godo died less than 48 hours before Christmas morning, and yet his parents still thought it a good time to go out dancing.

Vito and Sueanne divorced in Northern California in March of 1975. Before doing so, they produced several more children, each given increasingly ridiculous names. Gruvi Nipples Paulekas was born on June 23, 1967, exactly six months after Godo's death and, therefore, very near the summer solstice. Bp Paulekas was born on December 29, 1969, just days after the third anniversary of Godo's death. Bizarrely enough, Sky Paulekas was born on December 1, 1971, on what would have been Godo's eighth birthday. Last but certainly not least, Phreekus Mageekus Paulekas was born on January 28, 1974, a little over a year before Vito and Sueanne divorced. According to one report, Gruvi has joined Godo in the great beyond, a victim of her voracious appetite for drugs and alcohol.

As for Carl Franzoni, there were indeed a couple of brothers named Franzoni who were brought over from Italy in the early 1800s to carve the Masonic monuments of Washington. According to Ihna Thayer Frary's book, They Built the Capitol, Guiseppe Franzoni (*and his brother Carlo*) "*had especially good family connections in Italy, he being a nephew of Cardinal Franzoni and son of the President of the Academy of Fine Arts at Carrara*." Also shipped over were Francisco Iardella, a cousin of the Franzoni brothers, and Giovanni Andrei, a brother-in-law of Guiseppe Franzoni. Thus far, I have been unable to verify that Carl Franzoni is in fact descended from these men, but it seems quite likely given that Carl would probably not be aware of such an obscure chapter of American history were it not for a family connection.

One final note: I looked it up and it turns out that Bobby Sherman ended up becoming a sheriff's deputy. For real. Unlike his late-1960s Here Come the Brides co-star, David Soul, who later became fake bad-ass cop '*Hutch*,' Bobby became a real bad-ass cop. So I guess he was pretty cool after all. Except for, of course, the hair. And the clothes. And the sappy songs. And the bad acting. And …

Let's just forget that I ever brought it up

"*No one here gets out alive*"

-Jim Morrison

Sometimes pieces of the puzzle just seem to fall from the heavens. I don't really know why that happens – and to be honest, I find it somewhat disconcerting at times. On Sunday, July 6, the venerable Washington Post, in a most timely manner, generously provided a new piece of the puzzle that even I, your jaded host, find rather remarkable. It seems that a former reporter and novelist by the name of Alex Abella "*has written a history of RAND, which was founded more than 60 years ago by the Air Force as a font of ideas on how that service might fight and win a nuclear war with the USSR ... Abella focuses on Albert Wohlstetter, a mathematical logician turned nuclear strategist who was the dominant figure at Rand starting in the early 1950s and whose influence has extended beyond his death in 1997 into the current Bush administration ... Wohlstetter epitomized what became known as the 'RAND approach' -- a relentlessly reductive, determinedly quantitative analysis of whatever problem the independent, non-profit think tank was assigned, whether the design of a new bomber or improving public education in inner-city schools.*"

Let me interrupt here for just a brief moment to note that the RAND corporation is a lot of things, but "*independent*" has never been one of them. Anyway, getting back to the Post's timely book review, we find that "*it was not so much Wohlstetter himself as his acolytes ... who had a major impact in Washington*." Most of those acolytes need no introduction, as the names should be instantly recognizable to just about everyone: Richard Perle (*who once dated Wohlstetter's daughter*), Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Andrew Marshall ("*formerly a RAND economist, who, as promoter of the high-tech 'Revolution in Military Affairs' in Donald Rumsfeld's Defense Department, was dubbed the Pentagon's 'Yoda*.'")

In the latter half of the 1950s and the early 1960s, while Wohlstetter was with the RAND corporation and also a professor at UCLA (*and while his wife Roberta also worked as an analyst for RAND*), Albert and his followers – the men who now serve as the apparent architects of US foreign policy – regularly met in a heavily wooded neighborhood in Los Angeles known as … actually, I think I'm going to defer back to the Washington Post's book review and let journalist Gregg Herken tell you how "*those bright, eager and ambitious young men ... had sat cross-legged on the floor with their mentor at his stylish house in (drum roll, please!) Laurel Canyon*."

The title of the Post's book review is "*Dr. Strangelove's Workplace*," which presumably is a reference to the notorious RAND corporation. But I think that we can all agree that the title could just as easily apply to Wohlstetter's stylish Laurel Canyon home. In fact, as the pieces of this puzzle continue to fall into place, it is beginning to seem as though "*Dr. Strangelove's Workplace*" might be a good title for the entire damn canyon. We now know that, in addition to hosting both a secret military/intelligence facility and a call-boy/kiddy-porn operation servicing prominent public figures, Laurel Canyon was also the birthplace and meeting place of what we now know as the '*neocon/PNAC*' crowd, as well as the home base of the guiding light of the Rand corporation.

Thus far in our journey, we have encountered Masons, the FBI, the OSS, the CIA, the secret society known as Skull and Bones, the Rothschild family, military intelligence of every conceivable stripe, the OTO, the RAND corporation, the 'neocon' cabal, and just about every other nefarious group that regularly pops up in the '*conspiracy*' literature – with one very obvious exception: we have not yet met up with any member of the legendary Rockefeller clan. Luckily though, we're about to remedy that oversight.

the rockefeller clan and pink fireworks

This next contribution comes from deep within the archives of Time magazine, from an article entitled "*The Bride Wore Pink*," published six decades ago on February 23, 1948: "*One morning last week, bespectacled Bryant Bowden, editor of the weekly Okeechobee (Fla.) News, sauntered into the Okeechobee courthouse and stopped*

Film set - Dr. Strangelove

to eye the bulletin board in the main hall. Among the marriage-license applications, which, by Florida law, must be publicly posted for three days before a ceremony, he saw something which made him goggle. Winthrop Rockefeller, 35, of New York – the fourth of John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s five sons and one of the most eligible bachelors in the world – had stated his intention of marrying one Eva Sears, also of New York."

"*Editor Bowden had a bitter moment – his paper would not be published for two days. Then he remembered that he was the Okeechobee correspondent for the Associated Press. He telephoned the AP office in Jacksonville. A few hours later, the whole U.S. journalistic horizon glowed a bright pink with the fireworks he had touched off*."

"*While the first headlines blazed (and while Manhattan gossip columnists scrambled to assure their readers that they had known all about the romance for months), herds of reporters were dispatched to find an answer to the question: Who is Eva Sears? Hearst's Cholly Knickerbocker (Ghighi Cassini) haughtily announced that she was Mrs. Barbara Paul Sears of the fine old Philadelphia Pauls and thus a society girl of impeccable pedigree. He was wrong*."

Indeed he was. So who was this mystery woman – this woman who had once had a brief career in Hollywood before moving to Paris and taking a job as a secretary at the U.S. embassy? She appears to have gone by many names at different times in her life, including Eva Paul, Eva Paul Sears, Barbara Paul, Barbara Paul Sears, and "*Bobo*" Rockefeller. None of them, however, was the name she was given at the time of her birth. As Time magazine noted so many years ago, "*Her parents were Lithuanian immigrants and she was born Jievute Paulekiute in a coal patch near Noblestown, Pa*." Even that, however, was not her real name – at least not by American custom and tradition.

In her parents' homeland, I am told, "Paulekiute" is the feminine version of a surname we have previously encountered: "Paulekas," which was her parents' surname. Eva Paul's father, as it turns out, just happened to be the brother of Vito Paulekas' father (*a fact verified by – and brought to my attention by – a member of the Paulekas family.*) I'm no genealogist, but I'm pretty sure that that means that the self-styled "*King of the Hippies*" was a first cousin of "*Bobo*" Rockefeller, and a cousin-in-law (*or something like that*) of Winthrop Rockefeller himself. Vito was also a cousin of the couple's only child, Winthrop Paul Rockefeller, who would later serve as the Lieutenant Governor of the state of Arkansas.

The Paulekas family, alas, missed the couple's day of celebration. According to Time, "*Bobo's mother and stepfather ... were unable to attend the ceremony because they were making a batch of Lithuanian cheese on their Indiana farm.*" I guess we all have our priorities. Truth be told though, the Paulekas clan has a somewhat different explanation: they were deliberately excluded from the ceremony as it was felt they were a bit too uncultured to break bread with the likes of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and the Marquess of Blandford.

We will be revisiting Vito Paulekas further on, to review other new information that has come my way. For now, we will just note that we can add the Rockefellers to the list of folks connected to the Laurel Canyon scene. And that, of course, made Laurel Canyon the ideal place for all the rock musicians and hippies and flower children to hang out in the 1960s and 1970s, even with the stench from all the dead bodies that kept piling up. Speaking of which, let's check in and see what names have been added to the Laurel Canyon Death List since we last took a peek.

The first new name I see is...

Eva Paul (left), Eva Paul Sears, Barbara Paul, Barbara Paul Sears, "Bobo" Rockefeller or Jievute Paulekiute?

• Mr. Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones, who purportedly drowned without assistance in his home swimming pool on July 3, 1969, at the age of 27 (*Jim Morrison would allegedly die precisely two years later, also at the age of 27*). Just three days after Jones' tragic death, the Stones, with the Hells Angels providing security, played a previously-scheduled concert in Hyde Park, footage of which appears in Kenneth Anger's Invocation of My Demon Brother. Despite his (*disputed*) claims of being the founder of the Stones, Jones had been unceremoniously dumped by the group on June 9, less than a month before his death. He was replaced just four days later by Mick Taylor (*who would later leave the group and be replaced by Ron Wood*). It would later be claimed that Jones was booted from the band due to his grossly inflated ego and his chronic substance abuse problems.

"*Fair enough*," you say, "*but what does any of that have to do with Laurel Canyon? Clearly the Stones were not a Laurel Canyon band*." True enough, but as Barney Hoskyns has written (*in Hotel California*), "*In the summer of 1968 the English band was flirting heavily with Satanism and the occult ... and spending a lot of time in Los Angeles.*" A lot of time, that is, in and around Laurel Canyon – and during that time, Mick Jagger was involved in two occult-drenched film projects: Kenneth Anger's Lucifer Rising and Donald Cammell's Performance.

Jagger was the first musical superstar tapped by Anger to compose a soundtrack for his Lucifer Rising project, which at the time was to star Mansonite Bobby Beausoleil (*who had, as we all remember, replaced Godo Paulekas*). Anger would later solicit a soundtrack for the long-delayed film project from Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, the proud owner of one of the world's largest collections of Aleister Crowley memorabilia, including Crowley's notorious Boleskine estate on the shores of Scotland's Loch Ness. When ultimately released, however, the film featured a soundtrack by neither Jagger nor Page, but rather one that was composed, recorded and arranged inside a prison cell by convicted murderer Bobby Beausoleil. The pre-prison footage that Anger had shot of Beausoleil, meanwhile, ended up in a different

film: the aforementioned Invocation of My Demon Brother. Starring in Lucifer Rising, as Osiris, was Performance writer and co-director Donald Seaton Cammell.

Donald Cammell was the son of Charles Richard Cammell, who happened to be a close friend and biographer of notorious occultist and British intelligence asset Aleister Crowley. Donald himself was the godson of the Great Beast. Cammell's decidedly Crowleyian film was originally to star his good friend Marlon Brando, but the role ultimately went to actor James Fox. Brando and Cammell, by the way, once wrote a novel together – a novel so horrifyingly bad that I dare not mention its title here for fear that some of you may purchase it out of curiosity and then blame me for any trauma you endure while attempting to actually read it.

the brandos drop dead

Speaking of Brando, by the way, have I mentioned yet the curious string of deaths that began eighteen years ago, on May 16, 1990, when Marlon's son Christian gunned down Dag Drollet, the father of his sister Cheyenne's unborn child, in Marlon's Laurel Canyon-adjacent home? Though convicted, Christian got off with a rather light sentence, thanks primarily to Marlon having had his own daughter, the prosecution's potential star witness, locked away in a mental institution in Tahiti, safe from subpoena. A few years later, on April 14, 1995, 25-year-old...

• Cheyenne Brando was found swinging from the end of a rope, her death unsurprisingly ruled a suicide. The next year, Christian Brando was released from prison and promptly became involved with a woman by the name of Bonnie Lee Bakley and

• Bonnie Lee Bakley caught a bullet to the head on May 4, 2001 while in the company of new hubby Robert Blake (*her tenth husband*). Marlon dropped dead next, on July 1, 2004 (*though his death wasn't particularly suspicious, given that he was getting on in years*). His home was promptly purchased by good friend and neighbor Jack Nicholson, who immediately announced plans to bulldoze it, declaring the structure to be decrepit. He never did though explain why a man wealthy enough to own his own chain of Polynesian islands was purportedly living in a derelict abode. A few years later, on January 26 of 2008, Christian Brando dropped dead at the relatively young age of 49.

Returning now, after that brief digression, to our discussion of Donald Cammell's Performance, we find that Mick Jagger was cast to play the role of '*Turner*,' a debauched rock star (*which, obviously, was a real stretch for Mick*). Fox played '*Chas,*' a violent organized-crime figure. He was trained for the role by David Litvinoff, a real-life crime figure and associate of the notoriously sadistic Kray brothers. Litvinoff reportedly sent Fox to the south of London for a couple of months to hang out with his gangster buddies; when he returned, according to various accounts, Fox had literally become the violent character he portrayed in the film.

Recruited to create the film's soundtrack was Bernard Alfred "*Jack*" Nitzsche, an occultist and the son of a supposed '*medium*.' Nitzsche, along with Sonny Bono, had begun his music career as a lieutenant for gun-brandishing producer Phil Spector (*Nitzsche was one of the architects of Spector's famed "wall of sound"*). Nitzsche was also a familiar presence on the Laurel Canyon scene, collaborating with such noted bands and artists as Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young, Crazy Horse, Randy Newman, Michelle Phillips, The Turtles, Captain Beefheart and Carole King. Nitzsche also worked with several of the people we will be adding today to the Laurel Canyon Death List, including David Blue, Ricky Nelson and Sonny Bono. And one guy who was already added to the list: Tim Buckley.

Nitzsche's Performance soundtrack was composed, according to author Michael Walker, "*in a witch's cottage in the canyon*" (*I'm not exactly sure what a "witch's cottage" is, but it's nice to know that Laurel Canyon had one*). One of the musicians hired by Nitzsche to play on that soundtrack was Lowell George, who we will also

Christian Brando

be adding to the Laurel Canyon Death List. For now, let's add...

• Donald Cammell to the list, since on April 24, 1996, he became yet another of the characters in this story to catch a bullet to the head (*need I add here that the wound was reportedly self-inflicted?*).

• "Jack" Nitzsche died five years later of a heart attack, on August 25, 2000. A few years earlier, he had made an appearance on primetime television – as a gun-brandishing drunkard arrested on the streets of Hollywood on the television show Cops.

Before moving on, there is one other thing I need to mention about Cammell's film: John Phillips once stated that Performance was about estranging one's self from society in order to create a new, better social order. "*With really intelligent people*," according to Phillips, "*it's almost a matter of inbreeding at this point.*" I don't know about all of you readers out there, but when I first stumbled upon that quote, it suddenly dawned on me that one element that was previously missing from this story was a pro-eugenics comment from one of our flower-power icons, so I'm glad that we were able to squeeze that in.

Since we now seem to have segued onto the topic of John Phillips, let's go ahead and add his good friend Steve Brandt to the Death List.

• Steve Brandt, who was also a close friend of the victims at 10050 Cielo Drive, allegedly overdosed on barbiturates in late November of 1969, some three-and-a-half months after the Manson murders. In the days and weeks following those murders, Brandt had placed numerous phone calls to the LAPD. Those calls became increasingly frantic in nature, and Brandt became increasingly fearful that his own life might be in jeopardy. He soon decided to put some distance between himself and LA, so he headed for New York City. On the night of his death, according to Phillips' autobiography, Brandt attended a Rolling Stones concert at Madison Square Gardens, where he attempted to run on stage but was repelled and beaten by a security guard. He then went home and, according to official mythology, overdosed.

It seems obvious that if someone had information that desperately needed to be made public, and if it was the kind of information that authorities had, say, willfully failed to act upon, and if the information was of the type that could not, needless to say, be taken to the mainstream media, and if the year was 1969 and the mass communication technology that we now take for granted did not yet exist, then grabbing the mike at a Stones concert at Madison Square Gardens might just be one of the most effective means of disseminating that information. Brandt failed in what may have been an attempt to do just that, and he turned up dead just hours later. Shit happens, I guess.

Moving on, I couldn't help noticing that when I mentioned David Blue a few paragraphs back, a lot of you scratched your heads and asked, "*David Who?*" Allow me then to quickly introduce you to another of the forgotten talents of Laurel Canyon. Blue was born Stuart David Cohen on February 18, 1941; shortly thereafter, his father was deployed overseas. According to David, his dad "*came hobbling home on crutches and stayed depressed all his life*" (*not unlike, it seems fair to say, the family situation of our old friend Phil Ochs*). David and his slightly older half-sister, Suzanne, endured a hellish existence consisting of alternating periods of rages and silences. Suzanne got out first, only to end up busted for prostitution in New York City in 1963.

• Suzanne's Blues next stop, just a few months later, was at the county morgue.

• David Blue, meanwhile, had gotten out of the house as well, by dropping out of school and joining the US Navy at the age of seventeen – just as Lenny Bruce had done. Like Jimi Hendrix, Blue was purportedly booted out of the service, after which he decided to become a folk singer. His first album was released in 1966; a later effort was produced by Graham Nash, who also, as everyone surely recalls, produced a record for Judee Sill, with whom Blue had much in common (*you people had better be paying attention because – I'm warning you! – there will,*

at some point, be a quiz on all this shit, and if you miss too many questions on that quiz, you will be locked out from further access to these articles!)

Just kidding!! I don't even know how to set that shit up! But if I did, I would totally fucking do it! Anyway, let's get back to our story …

Like Judee Sill, David Blue was one of the Laurel Canyon stars who never quite shone as brightly as they should have. And also like Sill, Blue was one of the first few acts signed by David Geffen's fledgling Asylum label. Finally, as with Judee, David was long forgotten by the time of his death, on December 2, 1982, when the forty-one-year-old Blue dropped dead while jogging in New York's Washington Square Park. The former rising star (*and occasional actor*) lay in the morgue for three days before anyone noticed that he was missing.

Peter Sellers in
Dr. Strangelove

"*Everybody was experimenting and taking it all the way.*
It opened up a negative force of energy that was almost demonic."
– Frank Mazolla, editor of the film Performance

"*There were a lot of weird people around.*
There was one guy who had a parrot called Captain Blood,
and he was always scrawling real cryptic things on the inside walls of my house, Neil Young's too."
Joni Mitchell, describing the Laurel Canyon scene at the tail end of the 1960s

Like Brandon DeWilde, Kenneth Anger, Mickey Dolenz and Van Dyke Parks, Ricky Nelson began his Hollywood career as a child actor. He was the son, as everyone surely knows, of America's favorite 1950s TV mom and dad, Ozzie and Harriet Nelson. Ricky began his rock 'n' roll career in 1957, when he was just seventeen. By 1962, he had scored no fewer than thirty Top 40 hits, trailing only superstars Elvis Presley and Pat Boone.

That reminds me that, before I forget, I need to add Elvis to the death list as well. And before you send me letters of protest, let me assure you that I do indeed know what a lot of you are thinking: "*But Dave, Elvis isn't dead! I just saw him the other day at the 7-11 right around the corner from my house. And, sure, he was looking a little bloated, but he was definitely alive. I mean, unless you're going to try to convince me that I watched a dead guy put away a ¼ lb. Big Bite.*"

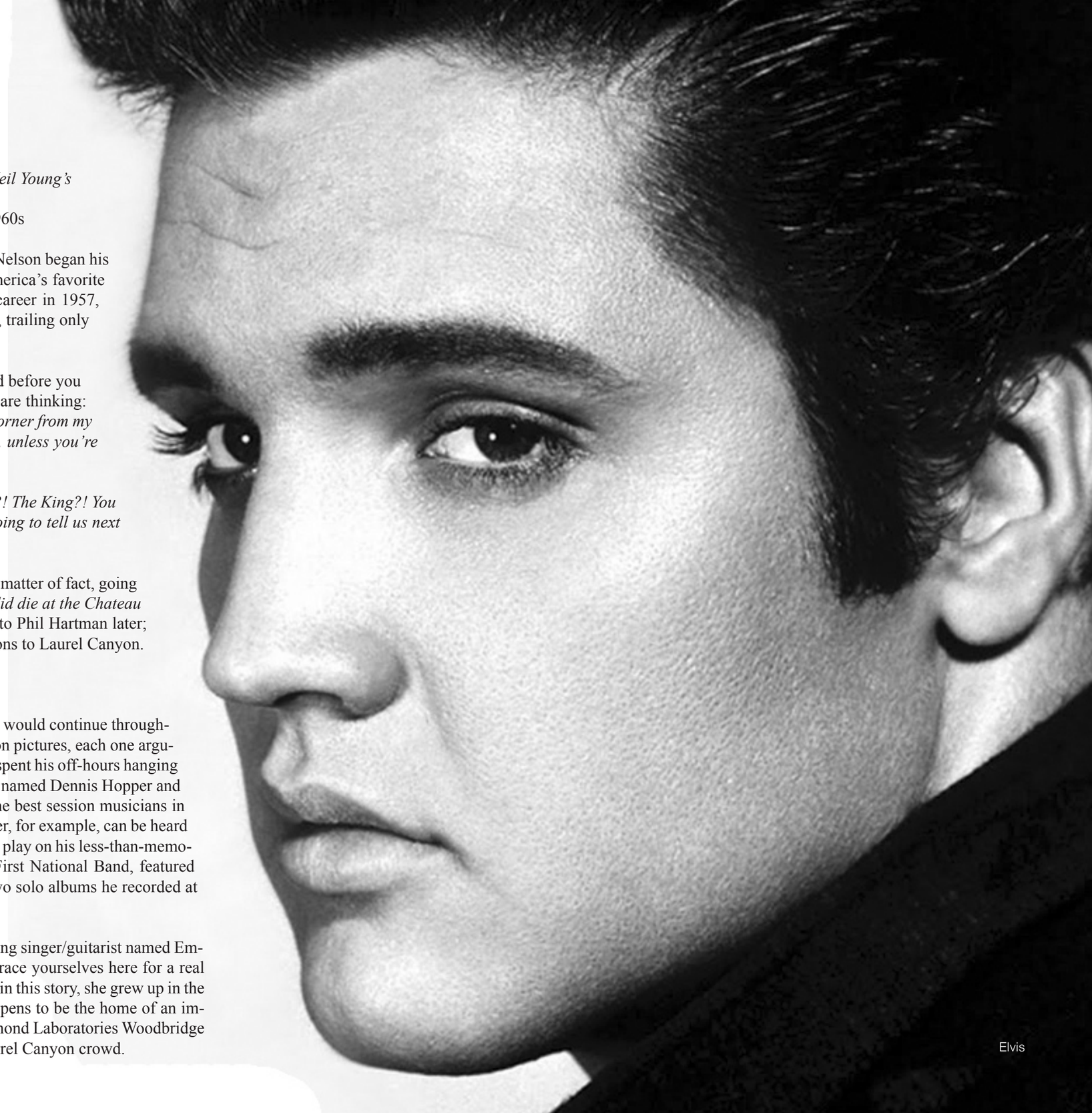
Oh wait … that might not be right … what you are probably really thinking is: "*Elvis?! The King?! You can't be serious! How the hell does The King figure into any of this? What are you going to tell us next – that comedians John Belushi and Phil Hartman belong on the death list as well?*"

Uhmm, have you been peeking at my notes or something? Because I actually am, as a matter of fact, going to include Mr. Hartman on the list (*and I could include Mr. Belushi as well, since he did die at the Chateau Marmont Hotel, which happens to lie at the mouth of Laurel Canyon*). But we'll get to Phil Hartman later; for now, let's talk a little bit about Mr. Presley and his admittedly tangential connections to Laurel Canyon.

elvis, center stage

Elvis arrived in LA in 1956, to begin what would prove to be a prolific film career that would continue throughout the 1960s and would result in the inexcusable creation of nearly three dozen motion pictures, each one arguably more appalling than the last. In the early years of his film career, Elvis reportedly spent his off-hours hanging out with his two best Hollywood pals – a couple of young roommates and Canyonites named Dennis Hopper and Nick Adams. In later years, Presley's backing musicians – considered to be among the best session musicians in the business – were in high demand among the Laurel Canyon crowd. Elvis' bass player, for example, can be heard on some of the Doors' tracks. The entire band was recruited by "*Papa*" John Phillips to play on his less-than-memorable solo project. Mike Nesmith's critically-acclaimed post-Monkees project, the First National Band, featured Presley's band as well. Gram Parsons also hired Elvis' band to back him up on the two solo albums he recorded at what proved to be the twilight of his life and career.

Those two solo efforts by Parsons, by the way, prominently featured the voice of a young singer/guitarist named Emmylou Harris, a relatively late arrival to the canyon scene. Harris is the daughter – brace yourselves here for a real shocker, folks – of a career US Marine Corps officer. As with so many other characters in this story, she grew up in the outlying suburbs of Washington, DC, primarily in Woodbridge, Virginia – which happens to be the home of an imposingly large Army '*research and development*' installation known as the Harry Diamond Laboratories Woodbridge Research Facility. In other words, Emmylou Harris fit right in with the rest of the Laurel Canyon crowd.



Elvis

ricky nelson

But here I seem to have digressed from our discussion of Elvis (*which was, if I remember correctly, itself a digression from our discussion of Ricky Nelson*). Given though that he had only peripheral connections to Laurel Canyon, I guess I don't really have much more to say about Elvis, other than that he reportedly died on August 16, 1977, the victim of a drug overdose at the young age of forty-two. As with Morrison, however, there have been persistent rumors that Elvis didn't actually die at all, but rather reinvented himself to escape from the fishbowl.

As for Nelson, in the mid-1960s he successfully shed his 'teen idol' image and emerged as a respected pioneer of the country-rock wave that Canyonites Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles would soon ride to dizzying heights of commercial success. One future member of the Eagles, Randy Meisner, played in Nelson's Stone Canyon Band. As the name of the band would seem to imply, Nelson did not live in Laurel Canyon but rather in one of the many neighboring canyons, but he and his band were very much a part of the early country-rock scene that included Laurel Canyon bands like The Byrds, Poco, the Flying Burrito Brothers and the First National Band.

Nelson was killed on New Year's Eve, 1985, in a rather unusual plane crash. According to Nelson's Wikipedia entry, "*the original NTSB investigation long ago stated that the crash was probably due to mechanical problems. The pilots attempted to land in a field after smoke filled the cabin. An examination indicated that a fire originated in the right hand side of the aft cabin area at or near the floor line. The passengers were killed when the aircraft struck obstacles during the forced landing; the pilots were able to escape through the cockpit windows and survived*."

I can't be the only one here who is pondering the obvious question: exactly when was it that the pilots were able to escape through the cockpit windows? I assume that they did not parachute out when the aircraft was still at altitude, leaving the passengers to crash and die. And they certainly couldn't have bailed out and survived while the aircraft was coming in for a landing. So was it after the plane touched down? If so, exactly how much time was there between when the plane touched down and when it impacted the fatal obstacles? How long was this '*escape window*,' as it were? I would think it was mere seconds, if even that, which wouldn't seem to be enough time to execute an escape. And if the plane was going fast enough on the ground that the impact killed all aboard, what are the odds that anyone would survive such an escape attempt? I think maybe the NTSB needs to take another look at this one.

peep holes

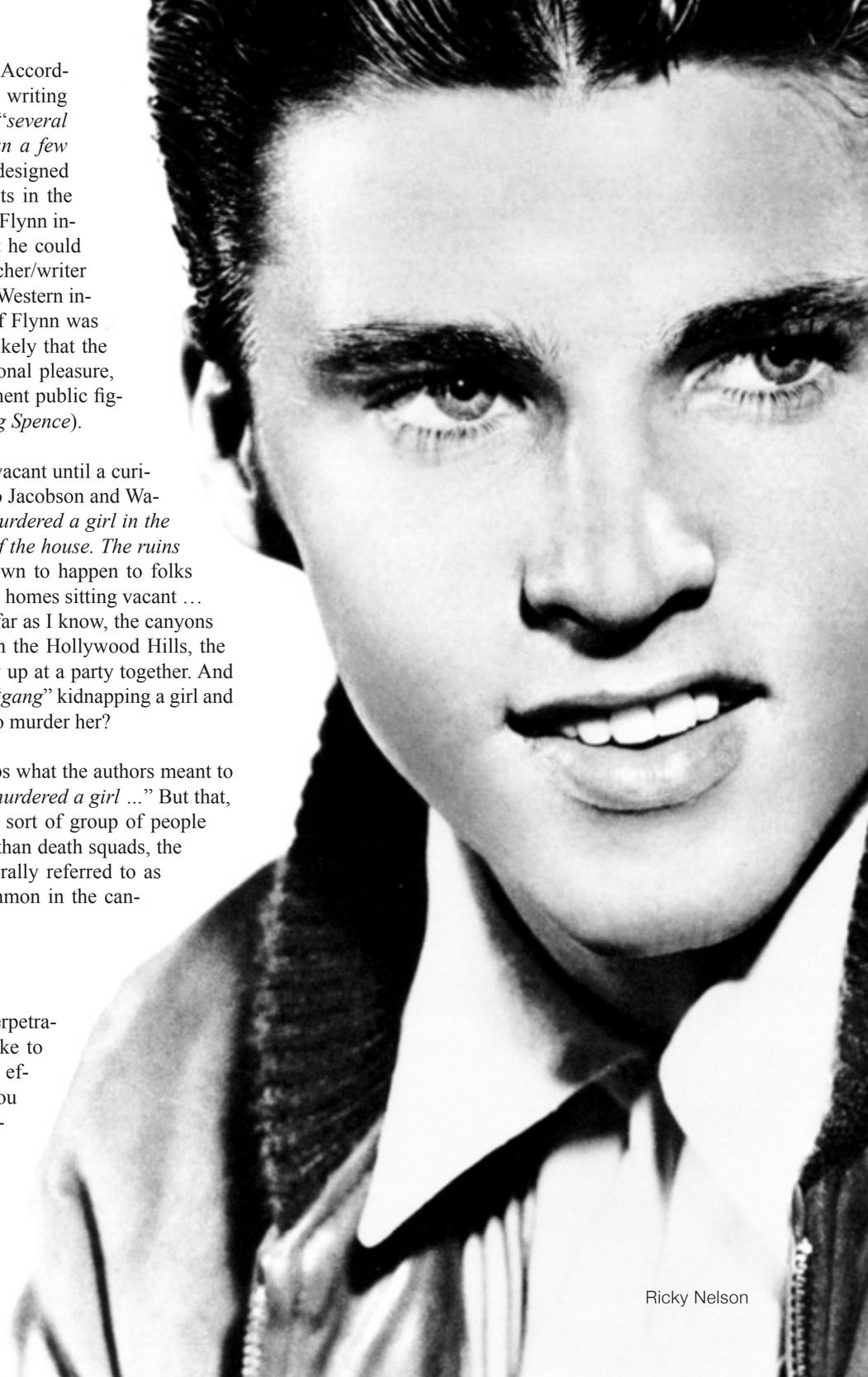
For the final eight years of his life, Nelson lived in a rather unusual home. In 1941, swashbuckling actor Errol Flynn had purchased an eleven-and-a-half-acre chunk of the Hollywood Hills just off Mulholland Drive and had a sprawling home built to his specifications. According to Laurie Jacobson and Marc Wanamaker, writing in Haunted Hollywood, the mansion featured "*several mysterious secret passageways, and more than a few peepholes*." The home appeared to have been designed to allow for surreptitious observation of guests in the home's numerous bedrooms. It is claimed that Flynn incorporated the unusual design features so that he could satisfy his own voyeuristic impulses. Researcher/writer Charles Higham, however, has cast Flynn as a Western intelligence asset (*and Nazi sympathizer*). And if Flynn was an intelligence operative, then it is far more likely that the home was built not so much for Flynn's personal pleasure, but rather as a means of compromising prominent public figures (*much like the home of, for example, Craig Spence*).

After Nelson's death, the palatial home stood vacant until a curious incident took place; referring once again to Jacobson and Wanamaker, we find that "*A gang broke in and murdered a girl in the living room. Then a mysterious fire burned half the house. The ruins were torn down.*" Shit like that has been known to happen to folks foolish enough to leave their expensive canyon homes sitting vacant … well, except for the part about the "*gang*." As far as I know, the canyons have never had much of a "*gang*" problem. In the Hollywood Hills, the words "*crime*" and "*gang-related*" never show up at a party together. And when was the last time anyone ever heard of a "*gang*" kidnapping a girl and then taking her to a remote, isolated mansion to murder her?

All things considered, I'm thinking that perhaps what the authors meant to say was that "*a group of people broke in and murdered a girl ...*" But that, of course, raises the question of exactly what sort of group of people jointly commit a premeditated murder? Other than death squads, the only such groups that come to mind are generally referred to as "*cults*," which I'm guessing are far more common in the canyons than are "*gangs*."

fire, fire, fire!

In addition to having a fondness for multi-perpetrator murders, it appears as though cults also like to start fires, oftentimes because fires are a really effective way of destroying evidence. Some of you may, however, be thinking that since the Hollywood Hills are plagued by wildfires on a more or less annual basis, then there is nothing particularly unusual about the fact that Nelson's home, and more than a few of the other homes in this story, were destroyed by fire. For the most part though, the fires that destroyed these structures were not



Ricky Nelson

natural wildfires but rather fires of mysterious origin that seemed to target specific buildings. As Michael Walker noted, "*Laurel Canyon would burn and burn again, targeting with uncanny precision the homes of its seemingly enchanted rock demimonde.*"

One exception was the Laurel Canyon home of blues-rocker John Mayall, which burned down to its foundation in a ferocious wildfire on September 16, 1979; that wildfire also claimed the home of Whisky owner Elmer Valentine. It was from Mayall's Bluesbreakers, by the way, that the Rolling Stones recruited guitarist Mick Taylor, who I regrettably disparaged in the initial version of the last installment of this series. Taylor was actually quite an accomplished guitarist whose work with the Stones was frequently uncredited and who was under-utilized by the band. My apologies to all the fans of the Rolling Stones who I offended.

roswell

Moving on then to the next new name on our list, we find that on December 31, 1943 – precisely forty-two years before the plane crash that would claim the life of Ricky Nelson – Henry John Deutschendorf, Jr., better known as John Denver, was born in Roswell, New Mexico. A few years later, the town of Roswell would make a name for itself and become something of a tourist destination. But that is not really our focus here today, though it should be noted that Henry John Deutschendorf, Sr. might well have known a little something about that incident, given that he was a career US Air Force officer assigned to the Roswell Army Air Field (*later renamed the Walker Air Force Base*), which was likely the origin of the object that famously crashed in Roswell.

After spending his childhood being frequently uprooted, as did many of our cast of characters, Denver attended Texas Tech University in the early 1960s. In 1964, he apparently heard the call of the Pied Piper and promptly dropped out of school and headed for LA. Once there, he joined up with the Chad Mitchell Trio, the group from which Jim McGuinn had recently departed to co-found The Byrds. By November 1966, Denver was front-and-center at the so-called '*Riot on the Sunset Strip*,' alongside folks like Peter Fonda, Sal Mineo and a popular husband-and-wife duo known as Sonny and Cher.

A decade later, in the latter half of the 1970s, Denver could be found working alongside a spooky chap by the name of Werner Erhard, creator of so-called '*EST*' training. After graduating from the '*training*' program, Denver penned a little ditty that became the organization's theme song. In 1985, Denver testified alongside our old friend Frank Zappa at the PMRC hearings. Twelve years later, in autumn of 1997...

• John Denver died when his self-piloted plane crashed soon after taking off from Monterey Airport, very near where the Monterey Pop Festival had been held thirty years earlier. The date of the crash, curiously enough, was one that we have stumbled across repeatedly: October 12th.

cherilyn sarkisian lapierre

The next name we need to add to the list is one that has already worked its way into this narrative a time or two: Sonny Bono. As previously noted, Bono began his Hollywood career as a lieutenant for reclusive murder suspect Phil Spector. In the early 1960s, Bono hooked up with an underage Cherilyn Sarkisian LaPierre to form a duo known first as Caesar and Cleo, and then as Sonny and Cher. The pair were phenomenally successful, first on the Sunset Strip and later on television. Bono, of course, ultimately gave up the Hollywood life and found work in a different branch of the federal government: the U.S. House of Representatives.

• Sonny Bono died on January 5, 1998, after purportedly skiing into a tree. At the time, Bono occupied a seat on the House Judiciary Committee, which was about to come to sudden prominence with the investigation and impeachment of President Bill Clinton. The ball was already rolling by the time of Bono's death, and on January 26, 1998, just three weeks after the alleged skiing incident, Clinton held the now-notorious press conference in

Sonny and Cher - 1965

which he uttered the fateful words: "*I did not have sexual relations with that skank, by which I mean that the executive penis did not, at any time, penetrate her womanly parts, though it is possible that she may have taken a few puffs on the presidential cigar, if you fellas know what I mean. Does anyone else have a question?*" By that time, of course, Bono's seat on the panel had been set aside for his robowife (*who was, perhaps, more willing to act out the charade*).

And now, as promised, let's turn our attention to Phil Hartman. As everyone likely remembers, Saturday Night Live alumnus Hartman was murdered in his Encino home on May 28, 1998. That much is not in dispute. Decidedly less clear is the answer to the question of who it was that actually shot and killed Hartman. The official story, of course, holds that it was his wife Brynn, who shortly thereafter shot herself – with a different gun, naturally, and reportedly after she had left the house and then returned with a friend, and after the LAPD had arrived at the home. There is a very strong possibility, however, that both Phil and his wife were murdered, with the true motive for the crime covered up by trotting out the tired but ever-popular murder/suicide scenario.

In most people's minds, of course, Phil Hartman is not associated with the Laurel Canyon scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s. But as it turns out, Hartman did indeed have substantial ties to that scene. To begin with, during the time that Jimi Hendrix lived in LA (*in the spacious mansion just north of the Log Cabin on Laurel Canyon Boulevard*), Hartman worked for him as a roadie. Soon after that, Phil found work as a graphic artist and he quickly found himself much in demand by the Laurel Canyon rock royalty. In addition to designing album covers for both Poco and America, Hartman also, believe it or not, designed a readily recognizable rock symbol that has endured for nearly forty years: the distinctive CSN logo for Crosby, Stills and Nash.

squeaky

Hartman had ties to the darker side of Laurel Canyon as well. He was, for example, a high school chum of Lynette "*Squeaky*" Fromme, who would later find herself living alongside Charlie Manson at the infamous Spahn Movie Ranch. In bygone years, by the way, that very same Spahn Movie Ranch was frequently used as a filming location by western star Tom Mix, who was, as we all know, the man whose name was forever tied to the Log Cabin. Curiously enough, the Log Cabin's guesthouse (*aka the Bird House*), which is still standing, was designed and built by architect Robert Byrd, who also, according to one report, designed the house at 5065 Encino Avenue where Phil

Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme

Hartman was murdered, and the house at 10050 Cielo Drive where Sharon Tate and friends were murdered.

While we're on the subject of the Bird House, I should mention that you can find numerous photos of the guesthouse and the grounds of the property at this website, although the web site no longer functions and the images are quite small it's still worth checking out:

http://crosbyentertainment.com/own_a_piece_of_hollywood_history.htm

Notice that among its other amenities, the house features a rather medieval-looking dungeon, because one never knows when a dungeon might come in handy for, uhmm, storing roots or something. Notice also that what was built as a '*guesthouse*' probably makes your own home look like it belongs in a shantytown, which would tend to indicate that the property's main residence, the Log Cabin, was a decidedly opulent dwelling.

One more curious factoid that I feel compelled to toss out here, since I did reference the Spahn Movie Ranch, is that during the days of the Manson clan's stay at that now infamous former film set, there was a similarly dilapidated movie set that was located right across the road from Spahn. It's name, in case you were wondering, was the Wonderland Movie Ranch.

ron, billy, barbara and joy

Speaking of Wonderland, let's turn our attention next to four individuals whose names will probably not be familiar to most readers: Ronald Launius, Billy Deverell, Barbara Richardson and Joy Miller. All died on July 1, 1981, all by bludgeoning, and all at the same location: 8763 Wonderland Avenue in Laurel Canyon. All were members of a gang that trafficked heavily in cocaine and occasionally in heroin. The leader of the group was Ron Launius, who reportedly embarked on his criminal career, and established his drug connections, while serving for Uncle Sam over in Vietnam, which is also where he began to build his carefully-crafted reputation as a cold-blooded killer. At the time that he became a murder victim himself, Launius was a suspect in no fewer than twenty-seven open homicide investigations. He was also a drug supplier to various members of the Laurel Canyon aristocracy.

the witness protection program

Victim Billy Deverell was Launius' second-in-command, and victim Joy Miller was Billy's girlfriend as well as the renter of the Laurel Canyon drug den. Victim Barbara Richardson was the girlfriend of another member of the gang, David Lind,

who conveniently was not at the home at the time of the mass murder. That could well have been due to the fact that Lind was, according to various rival drug dealers, a police informant for both the Sacramento and Los Angeles Police Departments. He was also a member of the ultra-violent prison gang known as the Aryan Brotherhood (*as is, by several accounts, a guy that we have bumped into several times during this journey: Bobby Beausoleil*). Lind, who met Launius when the two had served time together, is alleged to have overdosed in 1995, though it is widely believed that he actually went into the federal witness protection program.

The next name to go on our list is that of Brian Cole, bass player for The Association, an LA folk-rock band known for the hit songs "*Along Comes Mary*" and "*Never My Love*." The Association was not a Laurel Canyon band but they did have close ties to the scene. The group was formed by Terry Kirkman and Jules Alexander; Kirkman had formerly played in a band with Frank Zappa, while Alexander was fresh from a stint in the US Navy. Jerry Yester, a guitarist and keyboardist with the band, was formerly with The Modern Folk Quartet, a band managed by Zappa manager Herb Cohen and produced by Byrds' manager Jim Dickson. Guitarist Larry Ramos had formerly been with the New Christy Minstrels, which also produced Gene Clark of The Byrds.

On June 16, 1967, Cole and his band were the first to take the stage at the Monterey Pop Festival, followed by such Laurel Canyon stalwarts as The Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and the Mamas and the Papas. Five years later, on August 2, 1972...

• Brian Cole was found dead in his Los Angeles home. The cause of death was reportedly a heroin overdose. Cole was one month shy of his thirtieth birthday at the time of his death.

Another new name on the Laurel Canyon Death List is Lowell George, the founder and creative force behind the critically-acclaimed but largely obscure band known as Little Feat. George was the son of Willard H. George, a famous furrier to the Hollywood movie studios. Lowell's first foray into the music world was with a band known as The Factory, which cut some demos with a guy by the name of Frank Zappa. The Factory evolved into the Fraternity of Man, though without George, who had left to serve as lead vocalist for The Standells. George returned, however, to join the band in the studio for the recording of their second album. By that time, as we have already seen, the Fraternity of Man had taken up residence in the Log Cabin, alongside Carl Franzoni and his fellow Freaks.

George next joined up with Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, though his tenure there was destined to be a short one; like so many others, Lowell left embittered by Zappa's dictatorial approach to making music and his condescending treatment of his band-mates. During his time with Zappa, George helped Frank out in the studio with the GTOs' first (*and only*) album, as did Brits Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart (*who, readers of Programmed to Kill will recall, was one of the last people known to have been in the company of a pair of underage girls before they became victims of a 'serial killer' in June 1980*).

After parting company with Zappa, George formed Little Feat, a band composed mostly of musicians from the Fraternity of Man sessions. Lowell, who is credited with being a pioneer of the use of slide guitar in rock music, served as singer, songwriter and lead guitarist for the band, which released its debut album in 1970. Though well regarded within the industry and by critics, the band's albums failed to sell and George ultimately announced the demise of the band and recorded a solo album. After playing a show on June 29, 1979 at George Washington University in support of that album...

• Lowell George was found dead in an Arlington, Virginia hotel room, very near the Pentagon. Cause of death was said to be a massive heart attack, though George was just thirty-four years old at the time. According to Barney Hoskyns (*writing in Hotel California*), "*A regular social stop-off for George was a Laurel Canyon house on Wonderland Avenue belonging to Three Dog Night singer Danny Hutton. A drop-in den of debauchery, the Hutton house featured a bedroom with black walls and a giant fireplace. Lowell would often swing by and entertain*

the likes of Brian Wilson or Harry Nilsson." Nilsson and his regular drinking buddy, John Lennon, were frequent guests at this "*den of debauchery*."

Former Beatle John Lennon is, to be sure, one of the most famous names to be found on the Laurel Canyon Death List. Lennon also has the distinction of being one of the few Laurel Canyon alumni whose cause of death is acknowledged to have been homicide. The ex-Beatle, of course, never lived in the canyon, but he was a fixture on the Sunset Strip and at various Laurel Canyon hangouts, frequently in the company of Harry Nilsson. And as readers surely recall...

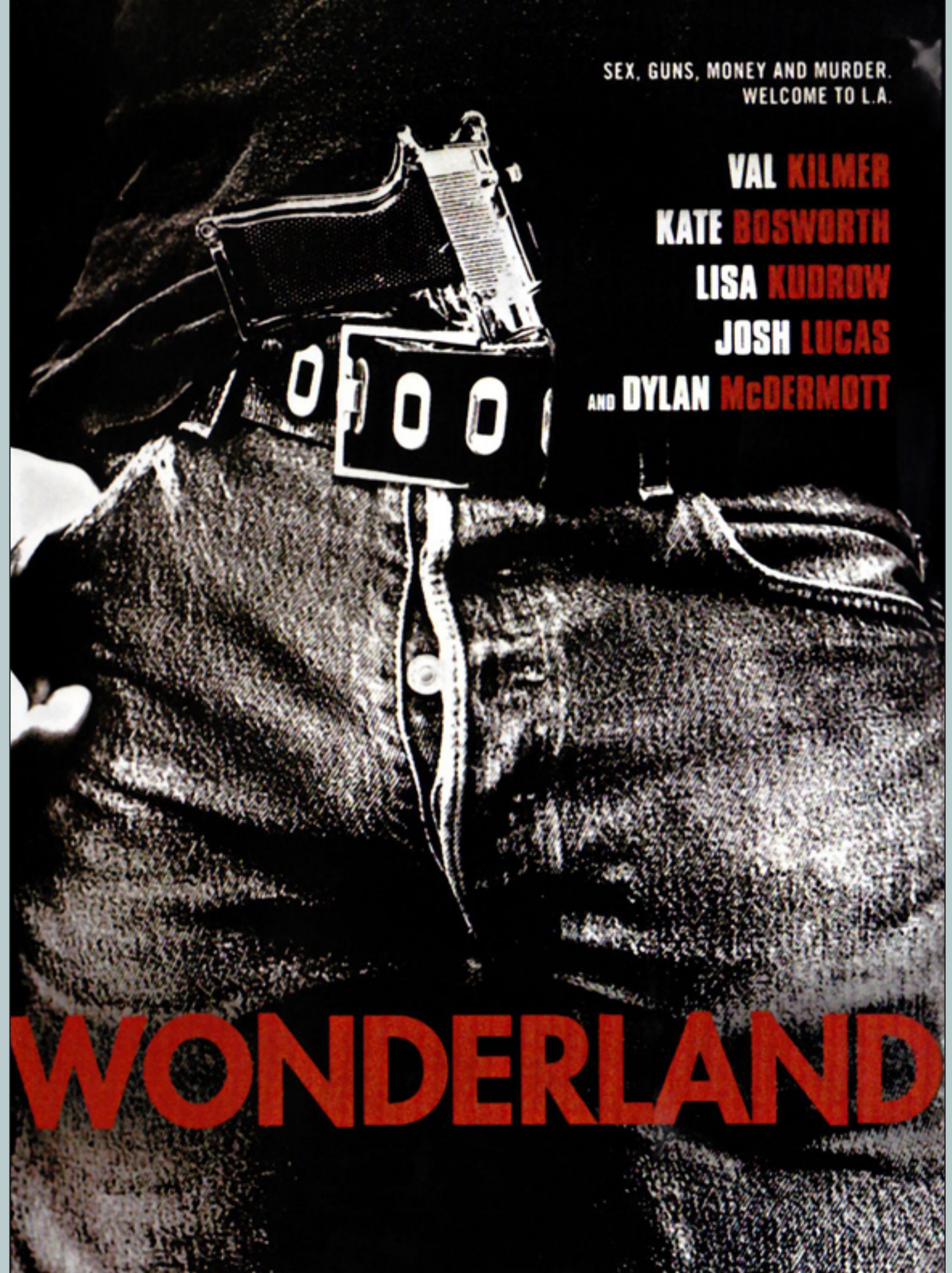
• John Lennon was gunned down on December 8, 1980 – purportedly by Mark David Chapman, but more likely by a second gunman. Lennon was, as everyone knows, murdered in front of New York's Dakota Apartments, which had been portrayed by filmmaker Roman Polanski in the 1960s as a den of Satanic cult activity (*in his film Rosemary's Baby*). Not long before Lennon's murder, Chapman had approached occult filmmaker Kenneth Anger and offered him a gift of live bullets. Just days after Lennon was felled, Anger's long-delayed final cut of Lucifer Rising made its New York debut, not far from the blood-stained grounds of the Dakota Apartments. And not long after that, the '*Reagan Revolution*' began to transform America.

• Tim Hardin – exactly three weeks after Lennon's death – canyonite, folk musician, close associate of Frank Zappa, author of Rod Stewart's "*Reason to Believe*," one-time tenant in Lenny Bruce's Laurel Canyon-adjacent home, and former U.S. Marine – died of a reported heroin and morphine overdose in Los Angeles. At the time of his death, on December 29, 1980, Hardin was just thirty-nine years old.

Eight years later, on July 18, 1988, singer/songwriter/keyboardist Christa Paffgen, better known as Nico, died of a reported cerebral hemorrhage in Ibiza, Spain under unusual circumstances. After achieving some level of fame as a vocalist with the Velvet Underground, Nico had left the Warhol stable and migrated west to Laurel Canyon, where she formed a bond with a then-unknown singer-songwriter named Jackson Browne, who contributed a few songs to Nico's 1967 debut album, Chelsea Girl (*so named for New York's Chelsea Hotel, from where Devon Wilson took a dive, and where the persona of John Train murdered the persona of Phil Ochs*). Also contributing a song to Nico's solo debut was Mr. Tim Hardin.

On December 4, 1993, some five years after Nico's curious death, Frank Zappa died in his Laurel Canyon home of inoperable prostate cancer. Some have speculated that the cancer could have developed as a result of the chemical agents Zappa was exposed to throughout his early childhood at the Edgewood Arsenal.

And so it goes. In the next installment, we will add two more famous names to the death list, and we will use them as springboards to launch into two rarely-told stories that will add new levels of complexity to the Laurel Canyon saga.



"By the time Manson shifted base from Rustic Canyon to an old ranch in Chatsworth, he'd begun formulating the notion that he and his followers had to prepare themselves for a race war with Black America."

– Barney Hoskyns (in Hotel California, his take on the Laurel Canyon/Sunset Strip scene)

In this outing, we will be temporarily leaving Laurel Canyon. But don't worry; we won't be traveling far, and we'll be returning soon enough.

rustic canyon

Today we will be exploring Rustic Canyon, which lies about nine miles west of Laurel Canyon. It was there, in Lower Rustic Canyon, that Beach Boy Dennis Wilson lived in what Steven Gaines described in Heroes and Villains as "*a palatial log-cabin-style house at 14400 Sunset Boulevard that had once belonged to humorist Will Rogers.*" The expansive home sat on three landscaped acres of gently rolling hills.

In the summer of 1968, as is fairly well known, Charlie Manson and various members of his entourage moved in with Wilson. "*Tex*" Watson, curiously enough, was already living there. As many as two-dozen members of Manson's clan spent the entire summer there, with Wilson picking up the tab for all expenses. The Mansonites (*mostly nubile young women*) regularly drove Wilson's expensive cars and demolished at least one of them. Dennis didn't seem to mind; he was busy recording Manson in his home studio and inviting fellow musicians, like Neil Young, over to the house to hear Charlie perform (*Young was so impressed that he urged Mo Ostin to sign him*).

Dennis would later claim that he had destroyed all the Manson demo tapes, that he remembered almost nothing of his time with Charlie and the Family, and that he certainly knew nothing about the Tate and LaBianca murders, which were committed in the summer of 1969, about a year after the Family had vacated the Rustic Canyon residence.

At some point in time, Wilson had a change of heart and decided that maybe he did indeed know a little something about the murders. "*I know why Charles Manson did what he did*," said Dennis. "*Someday, I'll tell the world. I'll write a book and explain why he did it.*" Needless to say, that book was never written and Wilson's story, if indeed he had one, was never told. Instead, Dennis Wilson drowned under questionable circumstances on December 28, 1983, in the marina where his beloved ship was docked.

*Pb Note: Interestingly enough, I built the boat Dennis Wilson fell off of and died on; drowned in Marina Del Ray Harbor. It's now owned by another gentleman who I had the pleasure of speaking with via emails and he posted some of my emails to his web site where he currently has the boat for sale. That link is here:
http://www.toujoursete.com/Toujours_Ete/Down_Memory_Lane.html

But this story isn't really about Dennis Wilson; it's about Charlie Manson and his alleged motive for allegedly ordering the Tate and LaBianca murders. According to the '*Helter Skelter*' scenario popularized by lead prosecutor/disinformation peddler Vincent Bugliosi, Manson was hoping to spark an apocalyptic race war. It is said that Charlie believed that America's black population would prevail over whitey, but that, having won the war, the victors would be incapable of governing themselves. And that, alas, is when Charlie and his retinue would emerge from the shadows to take command.

According to Barney Hoskyns, Manson began formulating his race war theory during his stay in Rustic Canyon. If true, then Charlie appears to have been following in the footsteps of a former Rustic Canyon guru – one who preceded him by a few decades, and who, like Charlie, had a certain fondness for swastikas.

Dennis Wilson

512 poured concrete steps

Just to the north of Dennis Wilson's old home is a vast wilderness of undeveloped canyon lands. Lower Rustic Canyon soon gives way to Upper Rustic Canyon, and all signs of human civilization abruptly vanish. The land remains wild and undeveloped save for an old fire road that winds along the summit between Rustic Canyon and a neighboring canyon. That road is closed to the public and vehicle traffic is nonexistent. Aside from an occasional hiker wandering in from nearby Will Rogers State Park, there is nary a human to be seen.

The farther in one hikes, the more wild and untamed it becomes. Along with the sights of the city, the sounds and the scents quickly disappear as well. Within a very short time, it is surprisingly easy to forget that one is still within the confines of the city of Los Angeles. In its fall splendor, the canyon looks nothing like the Los Angeles that I know and don't quite love. It is beautiful, serene, pastoral. And yet, filled with mist and heavily overgrown, it is also vaguely ominous.

hermit chic

If one knows where to look, there is a narrow concrete stairway that is accessible from the fire road. This stairway descends down to the floor of the canyon, and it is a very, very long descent. Five hundred and twelve steps long, to be exact. As one makes the descent, this stairway, which seems to go on forever, seems wildly out of place. With time to kill on the way down, one finds oneself pondering (*actually, most people probably wouldn't, but I did*) how many man-hours it took to set forms for 512 poured concrete steps, and how truckloads of concrete had to be poured out here in the middle of nowhere.

Reaching the canyon floor, one finds that, though the native flora has struggled mightily to reclaim the land, remnants of a past civilization can be seen everywhere. Some structures remain largely intact – a nearly 400,000-gallon, spring-fed reservoir serving a sophisticated potable water system; a concrete-walled structure that once housed twin electrical generators capable of lighting a small town; more concrete stairways hundreds of steps long, each snaking its way up the canyon walls; weathered livestock stables; professionally graded and paved roads; countless stone retaining walls; an incinerator; concrete foundations and skeletal remains of former dwellings; the rusting carcass of a Mansonesque VW bus; and, at the former entrance, an imposing set of electronically-controlled, wrought-iron security gates.

It is the kind of place that seems tailor-made for Charlie and his Family – remote and secluded, yet accessible by the Family's custom-built dune buggies; with just enough crumbling infrastructure to provide rudimentary shelter for the clan; and with elaborate security provisions, including sentry positions and a formerly-electrified fence completely encircling the 50-acre compound (*as well as, by some reports, an underground tunnel complex*). And it was located just a short hike up the canyon from the place that Charlie Manson called home in the summer of 1968.

While exploring this place, obvious questions begin to come to mind (*they would, that is, if I didn't already know the answers, but try to work with me here*): who developed this remote portion of the canyon? And why? Why here, in what feels like the middle of nowhere? The goal appears to have been to create a hidden and completely self-sustaining community, and an extraordinary amount of money was invested in infrastructure development … but why?

Very few Angelenos know of the curious ruins in Rustic Canyon, and fewer still know the history of those ruins. Every now and then though, a local reporter will pay a visit and the story will make a one-time appearance in a local publication, briefly casting some light on a bit of the hidden history of Los Angeles. In May 1992, Marc Norman of the Los Angeles Business Journal was one such reporter ("*Hermit Chic – Rustic Canyon*").

Rustic Canyon

Rustic Canyon

According to Norman, "*County records show 'Jessie Murphy, a widow,' purchasing 50-plus acres north of [Will] Rogers' property in 1933, but the owners were actually named Stephens – Norman, an engineer with silver-mining interests, and Winona, the daughter of an industrialist and a woman given to things supernatural. Local lore has it that Winona fell under the spell of a certain unnamed gentleman …*"

This trio, along with unnamed others, began "*a 10-year construction program costing $4 million … starting with a water tank holding 375,000 gallons and a concrete diesel-powered generator station with foot-thick walls – both of which are still visible. The hillsides were terraced for orchards, an electrified fence circled the boundaries and a huge refrigerated locker was built into a hillside … The one thing Murphy/Stephens couldn't seem to get right was their main house. The first architect hired was Welton Becket, but there are also sketches by Lloyd Wright, and in 1941, Paul Williams drafted blueprints for a sprawling mansion with 22 bedrooms, a children's dining room, a gymnasium, pool and a workshop in the basement.*"

nazi's in the canyons

Thirteen years later, in September 2005, Cecelia Rasmussen of the Los Angeles Times added a few details to the story ("*Rustic Canyon Ruin May Be a Former Nazi Compound," September 4, 2005*): "*Southern California has been the cradle to many odd cults, credos, utopias and dystopias. Among the most mysterious are the ruins of a Rustic Canyon enclave once known as Murphy Ranch … on [Rustic Canyon's] secluded and woodsy floor stand the eerily burned-out and graffiti-scarred remains of concrete and steel structures, underground tunnels and stairways leading from the top of the canyon to the bottom … Behind the locked and rusted wrought iron entrance gates and flagstone wall stand the traces of a small community that had the capacity to grow its own food, generate its own electricity and dam its own water … The hillsides were terraced with 3,000 nut, citrus, fruit and olive trees, and fitted with water pipes, sprinklers and an elaborate greenhouse. A high barbed-wire fence discouraged intruders … research indicates that it could have been home to up to 40 local Nazis from about 1933 to 1945 … armed guards patrolled the canyon dressed in the uniform worn by Silver Shirts, a paramilitary group modeled after Hitler's brownshirts … A man known through oral histories only as 'Herr Schmidt' supposedly ruled the place and claimed to possess metaphysical powers.*"

Rustic Canyon

herr schmidt

Herr Schmidt, needless to say, was the gentleman whose spell Winona Stephens fell under. According to Marc Norman, Schmidt "*convinced her that the coming world war would be won by Germany, that the United States would collapse into years of violent anarchy and that the chosen few (read: the Stephenses, the certain gentleman and other true believers) would need a tight spot in which to hole up, self-sufficient, until the fire storm had passed. Then they could emerge not only intact but, thanks to the superiority of their politics, rulers of the anthill and, not incidentally, the origin of its new population.*"

sound familiar?

Murphy Ranch also reportedly featured a 20,000-gallon diesel fuel tank, livestock stables and dairy and butchering facilities. Along both sides of the compound "*rise eight crumbling, narrow stairways of at least 500 steps each,*" as the LA Times noted. Those stairways apparently led to sentry positions high on the canyon walls (*for the record, they are not actually crumbling, though most are overgrown with impenetrable vegetation*). During Murphy Ranch's years of operation, nearby residents reportedly complained of late-night military exercises and the sounds of live gunfire echoing through the canyons.

To summarize then, it appears that the city of Los Angeles was home to a secret, militarized Nazi compound that

Rustic Canyon

was in operation both before and during World War II. Remnants of that blacked-out chapter of LA history can be seen to this day, though few make the trek. The purpose of the decaying compound was to ride out an anarchic, apocalyptic war, so that the chosen few could emerge as the rulers of the new world.

It was all so very Mansonesque, and, ironically enough, Manson and his crew spent an entire summer camped out at a home that was within a two-mile hike of this curious place. It should have been something of a Mecca for Charlie, and yet he apparently knew nothing of its existence. It seems somehow disrespectful that the Family didn't choose to set up camp here rather than at, say, Barker Ranch. At the very least, they should have paid a visit.

In the late 1940s, after the close of the war, Murphy Ranch was reportedly converted into an artist's colony. Architect Welton Becket, who designed several of the structures at the ranch, went on to design two of LA's landmark structures: the Capitol Records building and the Music Center. In 1973, the property once known as Murphy Ranch was purchased by the city of Los Angeles. As far as I know, the city has no plans to reopen the facility.

"*Van Cortlandt and Untermyer functioned as outdoor meeting sites for the cult*."
– Maury Terry, referring to the cult behind the 'Son of Sam' murders (*from The Ultimate Evil*)

Just to the west of Laurel Canyon, and slightly to the east of Coldwater Canyon, lies a large estate known as Greystone Park, home of the long-vacant Greystone Mansion. The home, and the grounds it sits on, is said to be, to this day, the most expensive private residence ever built in the city of Los Angeles. Constructed in the 1920s, the home and grounds carried the then-unfathomable price tag of $4,000,000 (*by way of comparison, the Lookout Inn, built a decade-and-a-half earlier, was projected to cost from $86,000-$100,000; in other words, the single-family residence cost at least 40 times what the lavish 70-room inn cost – and the inn required bringing infrastructure and building materials to a remote mountaintop*).

Rustic Canyon

blood-stained and abandoned

The massive, 46,000 square-foot edifice sits amid 22 lavishly landscaped acres of prime Hollywood Hills real estate. This rather ostentatious home was built by uberwealthy oil tycoon Edward L. Doheny as a wedding present for his son, Edward "Ned" Doheny, Jr. If that plot-line sounds vaguely familiar, it is probably because Edward Doheny was the inspiration for Upton Sinclair's Oil, and thus for the homicidal Daniel Plainview character in "*There Will Be Blood*" (*some of the interior shots near the end of that film, of expansive, marble-floored rooms, could very well have been shot in the real Greystone, though the exterior shots certainly were not*).

Upon the home's completion, in September 1928, young Ned Doheny and his new bride moved into the humble abode. Within months, the home would be bloodstained; soon after, it would be permanently abandoned.

Poor Ned, you see, was found dead in the cavernous home on February 16, 1929. Near him lay the lifeless body of his assistant/personal secretary, Hugh Plunkett. Both men had been shot.

Despite persistent rumors of an inordinately long delay in reporting the deaths, and of the bodies having been moved to re-stage the crime scene, no formal inquest was ever conducted and the case was written off as a murder/suicide arising from a gay lovers' quarrel. Plunkett was said to be the triggerman and the media quickly went into a frenzy playing up the scandalous homosexuality angle and portraying young Plunkett as positively demented.

teapot dome

It is anyone's guess whether or not the two really were gay lovers, but it matters little; the rest of the story was almost certainly a work of fiction. In reality, both men were likely murdered as part of the massive cover-up/damage-

Rustic Canyon

control operation that followed the disclosure of the Harding-era Teapot Dome scandal, which the Doheny family, as it turns out, was very deeply immersed in. The murder/suicide scenario was then trotted out because, as we all know, if the alleged perpetrator is already dead, it pretty much eliminates the need for things like investigations and trials.

Some forty years after those gunshots rang out in the opulent Greystone Mansion, a new Ned Doheny, scion of the very same Doheny oil clan, would join the ranks of the Laurel Canyon singer-songwriters club. Like Terry Melcher and Gram Parsons, Doheny was viewed by some as a '*trust-fund kid*.' His closest circle o

f friends included country-rockers Jackson Browne, J.D. Souther and Glen Frey. In addition to recording his own solo albums (*his self-titled debut was released in 1973*), Doheny contributed to albums by such Laurel Canyon superstars as Don Henley and Graham Nash.

Strangely enough, New York City once had a large estate known as Greystone as well. That Greystone was donated to the city as parkland, and it thereafter became known as Untermyer Park – the same Untermyer Park identified by Maury Terry as one of the two principal ritual sites used by the Process Church faction behind the '*Son of Sam*' murders.

The other site used by the cult was Van Cortlandt Park, named for Jacobus Van Cortlandt, a former Mayor of New York and one of David Van Cortlandt Crosby's forefathers. Another of Crosby's forefathers lent his name to Schuyler Road, which happens to run along the western boundary of the Greystone Park in the Hollywood Hills.

I have no idea what, if anything, any of that means, but I thought it best that I toss it into the mix.

Before wrapping up this installment, this seems like as good a time as any to introduce you all to a couple of Laurel Canyon characters who we haven't yet met, and who would attain a certain amount of fame, though not in the entertainment industry.

democrats and republicans

One of the two, whom we'll call Jerry, had a decidedly conservative upbringing. Born into a politically well-connected Republican family, Jerry devoted his early years to pursuing a career in the Jesuit priesthood. His father, an active Republican Party operative, was an aspiring politician who initially had no luck in getting himself elected to office.

Ultimately though, he succeeded in capturing the coveted California Governor's seat in 1959, and he did it by employing a simple gimmick: he merely changed the "*R*" after his name to a "*D*." He held the seat for two terms, through 1967, and then was replaced by a fellow who had employed a similar trick: replacing the "*D*" after his name with an "*R*."

fidel and che

That gentleman, of course, was Ronald Wilson Reagan, who would govern the state through 1975, when he handed the reins over to Jerry, who, like his dad, had decided that he was a liberal Democrat. In fact, according to the media, Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr. was an ultraliberal extremist whose politics fell somewhere to the left of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. During Laurel Canyon's glory years, Jerry Brown resided in a home on Wonderland Avenue, not too many doors down from the Wonderland death house (*and from the homes of numerous singers, songwriters and musicians*). His circle of friends in those days, as some may recall, included the elite of Laurel Canyon's country-rock stars, including Linda Ronstadt (*with whom he was long rumored to be romantically involved*), Jackson Browne and the Eagles.

mike curb - mondo hollywood

Another figure making the rounds in Laurel Canyon during the same period of time was a gent by the name of Mike Curb. At various times, Curb worked as a musician, composer, recording artist, film producer and record company executive (*left*). He also had the notable distinction of serving as the musical director on the notorious documentary feature "*Mondo Hollywood*", which ostensibly chronicled the emerging Laurel Canyon/Sunset Strip scene. Filmed from 1965 through 1967 (*well before the Manson murders*), the film featured representatives from the Manson Family (*Bobby Beausoleil*), the Manson Family's victims (*Jay Sebring*), the Freak troupe (*Vito, Carl, Szou and Godo*), and Laurel Canyon's musical fraternity (*Frank Zappa and his future wife, Gail Sloatman*). It also featured acid guru Richard "*Babawhateverthefuckitwasthathecalledhimself*" Alpert.

3 cubans inside west germany and red china

Mondo Hollywood, as I mentioned in a previous installment, was the creation of filmmaker Robert Carl Cohen, who, as it turns out, has an interesting background for a guy whose destiny was to capture on film the emerging 1960s countercultural scene. In 1954, Cohen served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The following year, he was on assignment to NATO. Following that, he served in Special Services in Germany. The very next year, he produced, directed, edited and narrated a documentary short entitled "*Inside Red China*". Two years later, he wore all the same hats for a documentary entitled "*Inside East Germany*". A few years later, he put together another documentary entitled "*Three Cubans*".

Cohen has proudly proclaimed that he was the first (*or at least among the first*) Western journalists/filmmakers allowed to enter and shoot footage in each of these countries. In the case of Cuba (*and likely the others as well*), he did so under the sponsorship of the U.S. State Department. Mr. Cohen would like us to believe that he undertook these projects as nothing more than what he outwardly appeared to be – an independent filmmaker – but I have a hunch that few readers of this site are naïve enough to believe that a private citizen not working for the intelligence community could land such assignments.

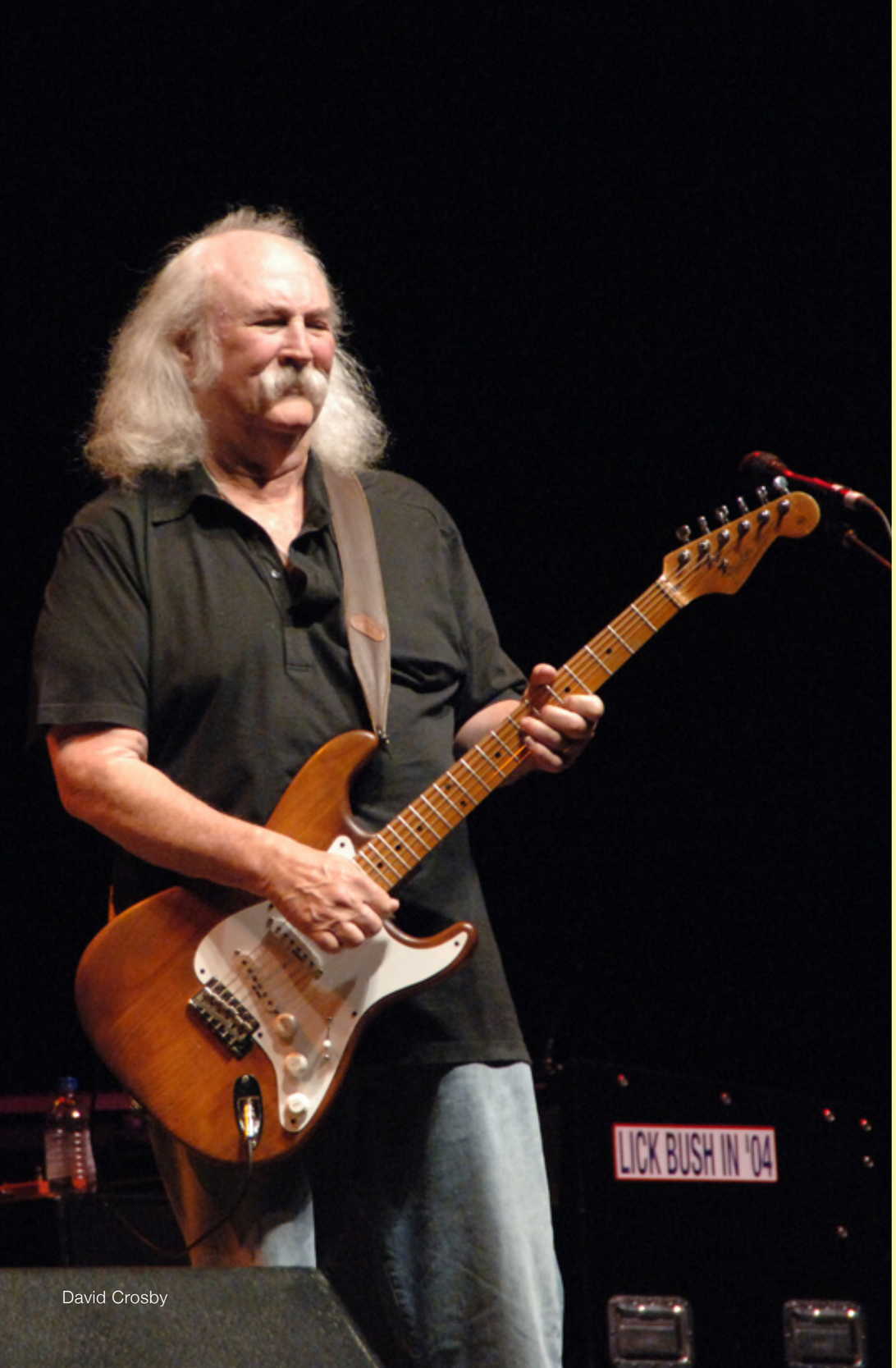
Have I mentioned, by the way, that Cohen is not a fan of this website? I know this because he sent a few e-mails my way in which he denounced my site as being "*based on slander and third-party hearsay*," or some such gibberish, and he followed that up by issuing some empty legal threats. As it turns out though, I don't much give a fuck what Robert Carl Cohen thinks of my website.

And now, after that brief digression, we return to our discussion of Laurel Canyon's dynamic duo of Jerry Brown and Mike Curb. In addition to his work on Mondo Hollywood, Curb also served as '*song producer*' on another key countercultural film of the era, Riot on the Sunset Strip (*which, despite its title, had little to do with the actual event*). In addition, Curb scored a slew of cheaply-produced biker flicks, including The Wild Angels, Devil's Angels, Born Losers, The Savage Seven and The Glory Stompers. Along the way, he worked alongside many of Laurel Canyon's '*Young Turks*,' including Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper.

It is unclear whether the paths of this odd couple crossed during Laurel Canyon's glory years, but as fate would have it, they were to cross in 1979 in Sacramento, California. Mike Curb, you see, after being encouraged by Ronald Reagan to venture into politics, was elected to serve as Governor Jerry Brown's second-in-command. And so it was that these two men, both veterans of the 1960s Laurel Canyon scene, came to sit side-by-side in the governor's mansion, one sporting a "*D*" after his name, and the other an "*R*."

Governor Brown, however, had little time to spend on actually governing the state of California. Tossing his hat into the presidential ring, he spent much of the first half of his second term out of the state, working the campaign trail. This allowed Lieutenant Governor Curb, as acting governor of the state, to sign into law a withering array of reactionary legislation that was far removed from what the people had in mind when they elected '*Governor Moonbeam*.' This arrangement allowed the nominal liberal of the Laurel Canyon tag-team, Jerry Brown, to keep his hands clean even as his administration moved far away from its originally stated goals – and even as he made little effort to rein in his wayward underling.

These days, Jerry Brown maintains little of his liberal façade. As California's Attorney General, he works hand-in-hand with the state's Nazi-loving governor, Ahhnuld Schwarzenegger. Of course, if his carefully-crafted image is to be believed, Schwarzenegger is practically a liberal himself. The truth however, is something much different … or maybe not. Given that we are living in an era when a straight-faced media can routinely describe Bill and Hillary and Barry O as liberals, then I suppose Jerry and Arnie have as much right to wear that label as anyone. But then again, so do George and John.



David Crosby

"*By that, I mean, 'Get me a lead singer. He's got sort of an androgynous blonde hair, very pretty. We need a guitar player, sort of hatchet-faced, wears a hat, plays very fast, very dramatic. He must be very dramatic. Get me a pound of bass player, pound of drummer … they're making little cardboard cutouts. They hire a producer, they hire writers … And in the current stuff now, they don't even bother getting people to play. Don't bother with that guitar player, bass player, drummer – nonsense … The people in those bands can't write, play, or sing.*"

– David Crosby, describing the synthetic, manufactured nature of today's rock bands

"*David was obnoxious, loud, demanding, thoughtless, full of himself – of the four of them [Crosby, Stills, Nash Young], the least talented.*"

– David Geffen

At the very beginning of this journey, I noted that Jim Morrison's story was not "*in any way unique*." As it turns out, however, that proclamation is not exactly true. It was a true enough statement in the context in which it appeared – which is to say that Morrison's family background did not differ significantly from that of his musical peers – but in many other significant ways, Jim Morrison was indeed a most unique individual, and quite possibly the unlikeliest rock star to ever stumble across a stage.

i wrote a lot of songs

Morrison essentially arrived on the scene as a fully-developed rock star, complete with a backing band, a stage persona and an impressive collection of songs – enough, in fact, to fill the Doors' first few albums. How exactly Jim Morrison reinvented himself in such a radical manner remains something of a mystery, since before his sudden incarnation as singer/songwriter, James Douglas Morrison had never shown the slightest interest in music. None whatsoever. He certainly never studied music and could neither read nor write it. By his own account, he never had much of an interest in even listening to music. He told one interviewer that he "*never went to concerts – one or two at most.*" And before joining the Doors, he "*never did any singing. I never even conceived of it*." Asked near the end of his life if he had ever had any desire to learn to play a musical instrument, Jim responded, "*Not really*."

So here we had a guy who had never sang (*apparently not even in the shower or in his car, which seems rather odd to me*), who had "*never even conceived*" of the notion that he could open his mouth and makes sounds come out, and who couldn't play an instrument and had no interest in learning such a skill, and who had never much listened to music or been anywhere near a band, even just to watch one perform, and yet this guy somehow emerged, virtually overnight, as a fully-formed rock star who would quickly become an icon of his generation. And even more bizarrely, legend holds that he brought with him enough original songs to fill the first few Doors' albums. Morrison did not, you see, do as any other singer/songwriter does and pen the songs over the course of the band's career; instead, he allegedly wrote them all at once, before the band was even formed. As Jim once acknowledged in an interview, he was "*not a very prolific songwriter. Most of the songs I've written I wrote in the very beginning, about three years ago. I just had a period when I wrote a lot of songs*."

In fact, all of the good songs that Morrison is credited with writing were written during that period – the period during which, according to rock legend, Jim spent most of his time hanging out on the rooftop of a Venice apartment building, consuming copious amounts of LSD. This was just before he hooked up with fellow student Ray Manzarek to form the Doors. Legend also holds, strangely enough, that that chance meeting occurred on the beach, though it seems far more likely that the pair would have actually met at UCLA, where both attended the university's rather small and close-knit film school.

how did he write the songs?

In any event, the question that naturally arises (*though it does not appear to have ever been asked of him*) is: how exactly did Jim "*The Lizard King*" Morrison write that impressive batch of songs? I'm certainly no musician myself, but it is my understanding that just about every singer/songwriter across the land composes his or her songs in essentially the same manner: on an instrument – usually either a piano or a guitar. Some songwriters, I hear, can compose on paper, but that requires a skill set that Jim did not possess. The problem, of course, is that he also could not play a musical instrument of any kind. How then did he write the songs?

He would have had to have composed them, I'm guessing, in his head. So we are to believe then that a few dozen complete songs, never heard by anyone and never played by any musician, existed only in Jim Morrison's acid-addled brain. Anything is possible, I suppose, but even if we accept that premise, we are still left with some nagging questions, including the question of how those songs got out of Jim Morrison's head. As a general rule of thumb, if a songwriter doesn't know how to read and write music, he can play the song for someone who does and thereby create the sheet music (*which was the case, for example, with all of the songs that Brian Wilson penned for the Beach Boys*). But Jim quite obviously could not play his own songs. So did he, I don't know, maybe he hummed them?

And these are, it should be clarified, songs that we are talking about here, as opposed to just lyrics, which would more accurately be categorized as poems. Because Jim, as we all know, was quite a prolific poet, whereas he was a songwriter only for one brief period in his life. But why was that? Why did Morrison, with no previous interest in music, suddenly and inexplicably become a prolific songwriter, only to just as suddenly lose interest after mentally penning an impressive catalogue of what would become regarded as rock staples? And how and why did Jim achieve the accompanying physical transformation that changed him from a clean-cut, collegiate, and rather conservative looking young man into the brooding sex symbol who would take the country by storm? And why, after a few years of adopting that persona, did Jim transform once again, in the last year or so of his life, into an overweight, heavily-bearded, reclusive poet who seemed to have lost his interest in music just as suddenly and inexplicably as he had obtained it?

meditation class

It wasn't just Morrison who was, in retrospect, a bit of an oddity; the entire band differed from other Laurel Canyon bands in a number of significant ways. As Vanity Fair noted many years ago, "*The Doors were always different.*" All four members of the group, for example, lacked previous band experience. Morrison and Manzarek, as noted, were film students, and drummer John Densmore and guitarist Robby Kreiger were recruited by Manzarek from his Transcendental Meditation class – which is, I guess, where one goes to find musicians to fill out one's band. That class, however, apparently lacked a bass player, so they did without – except for those times when they used session musicians and then claimed that they did without.

Anyway, the point is that none of the four members of the Doors had band credentials. Even a band as contrived as the Byrds, as we shall soon see, had members with band credentials. So too did Buffalo Springfield, with Neil Young and Bruce Palmer, for example, having played in the Mynah Birds, backing a young vocalist by the name of Rick "*Superfreak*" James (*Goldie McJohn of Steppenwolf, oddly enough, had been a Mynah Bird as well*). The Mamas and the Papas were put together from elements of the Journeymen and the Mugwumps. And so on with the rest of the Laurel Canyon bands

The Doors could cite no such band lineage. They were just four guys who happened to come together to play the songs written by the singer who had never sung but who had a sudden calling and a magical gift for songwriting. And as you would expect with four guys who had never actually played in a band before, they pretty much sucked. But don't take my word for it; let's let the band's producer, Paul Rothchild, weigh in: "*The Doors were not great live performers musically. They were exciting theatrically and kinetically, but as musicians they didn't make it; there was too much inconsistency, there was too much bad music. Robby would be horrendously out of tune with Ray, John would be missing cues, there was bad mike usage too, where you couldn't hear Jim at all.*"

As luck would have it, I have heard some audio of a young and quite inebriated Jim Morrison at the microphone, and I would have to say that not being able to "*hear Jim at all*" might have, in many cases, actually improved the performance. But sucking as a band, of course, does not really set the Doors apart from its contemporaries. Another thing that was unusual about the band, however, is that, from the moment the band was conceived, the lineup never changed. No one was added, no one was replaced, no one dropped out of the band over '*artistic differences*,' or to pursue a solo career, or to join another band, or for any of the other reasons that bands routinely change shape.

It would be difficult to identify another Laurel Canyon band of any longevity that could make the same claim. After their first two albums, the Byrds changed line-ups with virtually every album release. Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention were in a near-constant state of flux. Laurel Canyon's country-rock bands were also constantly changing shape, usually by incestuously swapping members amongst themselves.
But not the Doors. Jim Morrison's band arrived on the scene as a fully-formed entity, with a name, a stable line-up, a backlog of soon-to-be hit songs – and no previous experience writing, arranging, playing or performing music. Other than that though, they were just your run-of-the-mill, organic, grass-roots rock-and-roll band – with a curious aversion to political advocacy.

Jim Morrison was, by virtually all accounts, a voracious reader. Former teachers and college professors expressed amazement at the breadth and depth of his knowledge on various topics, and at the staggering array of literary sources that he could accurately cite. And yet he was known to tell interviewers that he "*[had]n't studied politics that much, really.*" But that was okay, according to drummer John Densmore, since "*a lot of people at our concerts at least, they're sort of – it seems like they don't really come to hear us speak politics*."

whoever financed elmer, i don't want to know

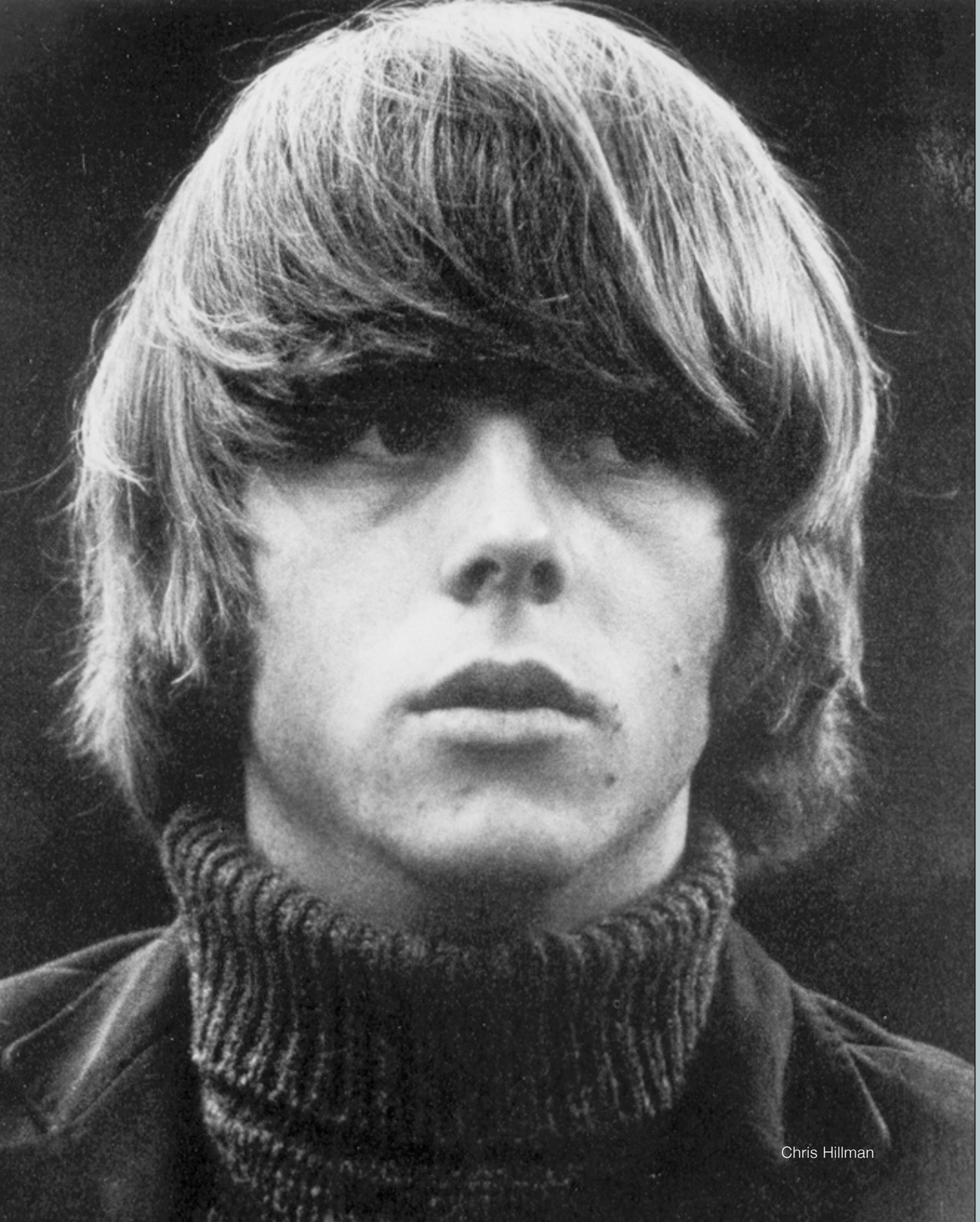
That's the way it was in the 1960s, you see; the young folks of that era just didn't concern themselves much with politics, and certainly didn't want their anti-war icons engaging in anything resembling political discourse.

During the Doors' glory days on the Sunset Strip, Morrison "*struck up an intimate friendship*" with Whisky-A-Go-Go owner Elmer Valentine, according to a Vanity Fair article ("*Live at the Whisky*"). At the time, Valentine was also, coincidentally of course, very close to his own secretary/booking agent, Gail Sloatman, whom Jim had known since kindergarten through Naval officers' circles. Valentine was also – by pretty much all accounts, including his own – a '*made man*.'

It was mentioned previously that Valentine was a former Chicago vice cop, but what wasn't mentioned is that he was a fully corrupt cop. By his own account, he worked as a police captain's bagman, "*collecting the filthy lucre on behalf of the captain.*" He also boasted that, even while working as a vice cop, his night job was "*running nightclubs for the outfit – for gangsters.*" One "*very close friend*" from his days in Chicago was "*Felix Alderisio, also known as Milwaukee Phil, who was arguably the most feared hit man in the country in the 1950s and 60s, carrying out at least 14 murders for Sam Giancana and other Chicago bosses.*"

Valentine was ultimately indicted for extortion, though he managed to avoid prosecution and conviction. Venturing out to LA circa 1960, he soon found himself running PJ's nightclub at the corner of Crescent Heights and Santa Monica Boulevards (*which, as you may recall, was co-owned by Eddie Nash and was the favored hang-out of early rocker/murder victim Bobby Fuller*). It wasn't long though before Valentine had his very own club to run – the legendary Whiskey-A-Go-Go, where numerous Laurel Canyon bands, including the Doors in the summer of 1966, served their residency.

Valentine obviously had considerable financial backing to launch his business enterprise, and it wasn't much of a secret on the Strip where that backing came from. Frank Zappa once cryptically referred to Valentine's backers as an "*ethnic organization*," while Chris Hillman of the Byrds simply noted that, "*whoever financed Elmer, I don't want to know.*" Valentine received far more than just financial backing to launch the Whisky; he got a generous assist from the media as well. As Vanity Fair noted, "*Within months of the Whisky's debut, Life magazine had written it up, Jack*


Chris Hillman

Paar had broadcast an episode of his post-Tonight weekly program from the club, and Steve McQueen and Jayne Mansfield had installed themselves as regulars." During that very same era, it should be noted, Mansfield was also a high-profile member of the Church of Satan, with close ties to founder Anton LaVey, who in turn had ties, as we have already seen, to the dance troupe led by Vito Paulekas, which, as we have also seen, had close ties to Laurel Canyon's very first band, the Byrds.

How was that for a segue?

no guitars, no amps, no mikes

As a fledgling band, the Byrds had any number of problems. The first and most obvious was that the band's members did not own any musical instruments. That problem was solved though when Naomi Hirschorn, best known for funding such other quasi-governmental projects as the Hirschorn Museum in Washington, D.C., stepped up to the plate to provide the band with instruments, amplifiers and the like. But that didn't solve a bigger problem, which was that the band's members, with the exception of Jim (*later Roger*) McGuinn, didn't have a clue as to how to actually play the instruments.

Cast to play the bass player was Chris Hillman, who had never picked up a bass guitar in his life. As he candidly admitted years later, he "*was a mandolin player and didn't know how to play bass. But they didn't know how to play their instruments either, so I didn't feel too bad about it.*" On drums was Michael Clarke, who had never before held a set of drumsticks in his hands, but who bore a resemblance to Rolling Stone Brian Jones, which was deemed to be of more significance than actual musical ability. As Crosby co-author Carl Gottlieb recalled, "*Clarke had played beatnik bongos and conga drum, but had no experience with conventional drumming.*"

Gene Clark, though by far the most gifted songwriter in the band and a talented vocalist as well, could play the guitar, but not particularly well, so he was relegated to banging the tambourine, which was Jim Morrison's (*and various non-musically inclined members of the Partridge Family's*) instrument of choice as well. David Crosby, tasked with rhythm guitar duties, wasn't much better. Crosby himself admitted, in his first autobiography (*does anyone really need to write more than one autobiography, by the way?*), that "*Roger was the only one who could really play.*"

The band had another problem as well: with the exception of Gene Clark, who was good but not terribly prolific, the group was a bit lacking in songwriting ability. To compensate, they initially played mostly covers. Fully a third of the band's first album consisted of covers of Dylan songs, and nearly another third was made up of covers of songs by other folk singer/songwriters. Clark contributed the five original songs, two of them co-written with McGuinn. As for Crosby, who emerged as the band's biggest star, his only contribution to the Byrd's first album was backing vocals.

Carl Franzoni perhaps summed it up best when he declared that "*the Byrds records were manufactured.*" The first album in particular was an entirely engineered affair created by taking a collection of songs by outside songwriters and having them performed by a group of nameless studio musicians (*for the record, the actual musicians were Glen Campbell – yes, that Glen Campbell, who also briefly served as a Beach Boy – on guitar, Hal Blaine on drums, Larry Knechtel on bass, Leon Russell on electric piano, and Jerry Cole on rhythm guitar*), after which the band's trademark vocal harmonies, entirely a studio creation, were added to the mix.

As would be expected, the Byrds' live performances, according to Barney Hoskyns in Waiting for the Sun, "*weren't terribly good.*" But that didn't matter much; the band got a lot of assistance from the media, with Time magazine being among the first to champion the new band. And they also got a lot of help from Vito and the Freaks and from the Young Turks, as was previously discussed.
We shall return to the Byrds, and to our old friend Vito, in the next outing. For now, I leave you with this curious

little story about Byrd Chris Hillman's initial arrival in Laurel Canyon, as told by Michael Walker in Laurel Canyon:

"*In the autumn of 1964, a nineteen-year-old bluegrass adept and virtuoso mandolin player named Chris Hillman stood at the corner of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Kirkwood Drive contemplating a "For Rent" sign on a telephone pole across from the Canyon Country Store ... It didn't take him long to find [a place to stay], and, in the canyon's emerging mythos of enchanted serendipity, one presented itself as if by magic. 'This guy drives up and he says 'you looking for a place to rent?' Hillman recalls. 'I said yeah, and he said. 'Well, follow me up.' It was this young guy who was a dentist. It was his parent's house, a beautiful old wood house down a dirt road – and he lived on the top, and he was renting out the bottom part. I just went, 'Wow, perfect.' The guy ended up being my dentist for a while ... It was the top of the world, a beautiful, beautiful place. I had the best place in the canyon*."

In Los Angeles, you see, it is quite common for a very wealthy person to offer exquisite living accommodations to a random, scruffy vagrant. I know this to be true because it happened to Charlie Manson on more than one occasion. In any event, no one will ever guess what happened to Chris Hillman's mountaintop home, so I'll just go ahead and tell you: it burned to the ground on what Walker described as a "*hot, witchy day in the '60s*." According to Hillman, "*Crosby was at my house an hour before the blaze. I can't connect it yet – where the Satan factor came into play with David – but I'm working on it*."

I think maybe I'll work on that as well.

"*I'd have to say that, personally speaking, Crosby was worse for the good feelings of [the local] rock'n'roll [scene] than Manson was.*"

– Terry Melcher

"*I had been to Terry Melcher's house on Cielo Drive many times*."

– David Crosby

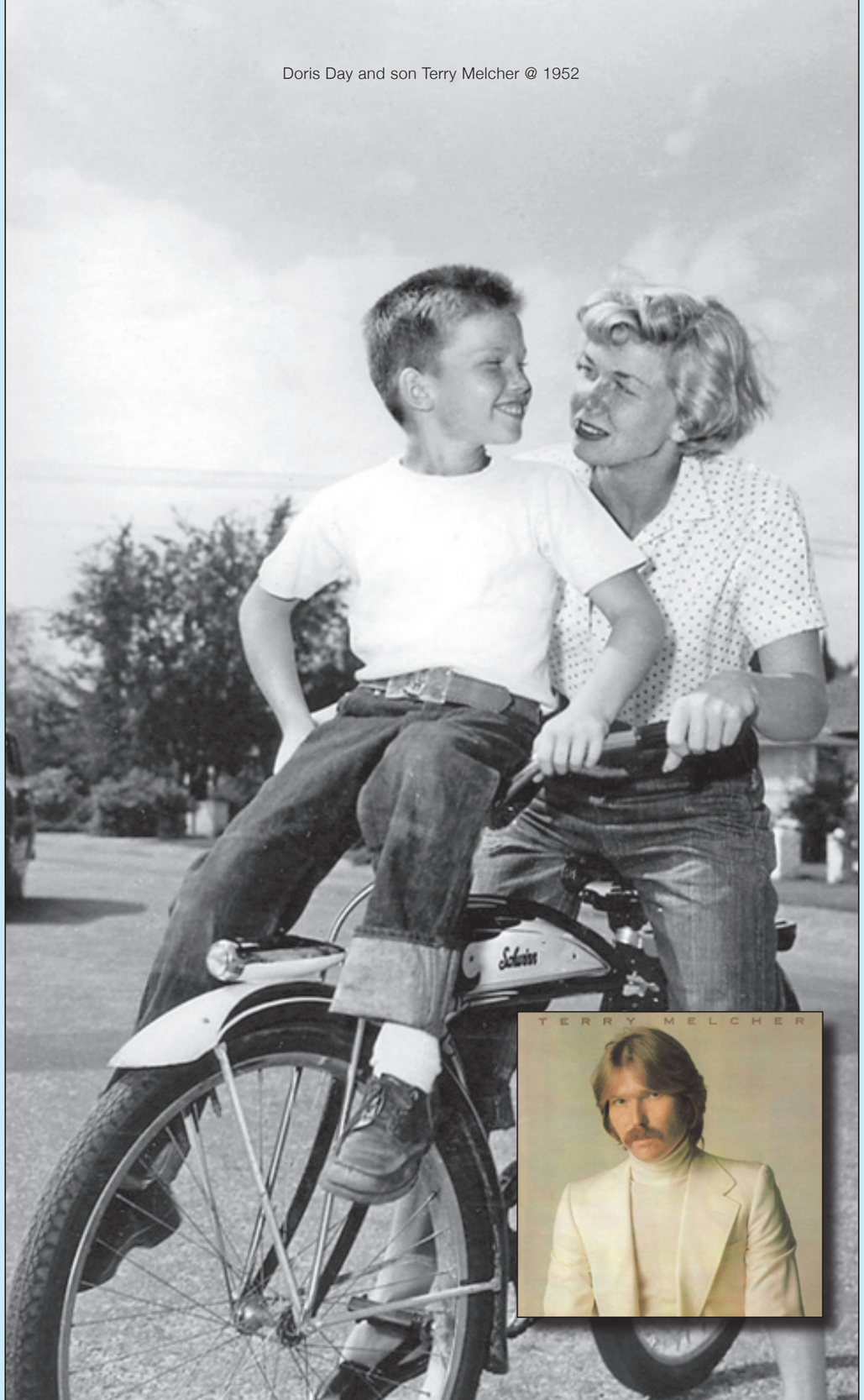
I believe we were discussing the Byrds when class was last convened, so let's now meet a formidable behind-the-scenes player and the band's first producer, Terry Melcher. It is fairly well known that Melcher was the son of '*virginal*' actress Doris Day, who was just sixteen when impregnated and seventeen when Terry was born. Melcher's father was trombonist Al Jorden, who reportedly regularly beat Day, and likely Terry as well. Jorden wasn't around for long though; his death, when Melcher was just two or three years old, was naturally ruled a suicide.

After an equally short-lived second marriage, Doris Day married her agent and producer, Marty Melcher, who was universally regarded as one of the biggest assholes in Hollywood – and that's not an easy title to attain, given the fierce competition. Like Jorden, Melcher was well known to be a tyrannically violent and abusive man. He also reportedly embezzled some $20 million from his wife/client. On the bright side though, he did adopt and help raise Terry, who took his name.

Terry Melcher was arguably one of the most important figures lurking about the periphery of the Laurel Canyon saga, by virtue of the fact that he had deep ties to virtually all aspects of the canyon scene, including the Laurel Canyon musicians, the Manson Family, the Vito Paulekas dance troupe, and the group of young Hollywood actors generally referred to as '*The Young Turks*.'

As it turns out, Melcher first met Vito Paulekas when Terry was still in high school in the late 1950s. As Melcher later recalled, "*Vito was an art instructor. When I was in high school, we'd go to his art studio because he had naked models.*" A half-a-decade or so later, these two would, each in his own way, become key players in launching not just the career of the Byrds, but the entire Laurel Canyon music scene, as well as the accompanying youth counter-cultural movement.

Also while still in high school, Melcher befriended Bruce Johnston, the adopted son of a top executive with the Rexall drugstore chain. While growing up on the not-so-mean streets of Beverly Hills and Bel Air, the two recorded together as singing duo Bruce and Terry. Johnstone also played in a high school band with Phil Spector, who,



Doris Day and son Terry Melcher @ 1952

it will be recalled, shared with Melcher (*and various others in this story*) the distinction of having lost a parent to an alleged act of suicide.

As I probably have already mentioned, it would be Spector's crack team of studio musicians, dubbed The Wrecking Crew, who would provide the instrumental tracks for countless albums by Laurel Canyon bands. Bruce Johnston, meanwhile, would go on to become a Beach Boy, replacing Wrecking Crew member Glen Campbell, who had briefly replaced Brian Wilson after Brian abruptly decided that he no longer wanted to perform live. Brian's little brother Dennis, meanwhile, famously forged a close bond with Terry Melcher, as well as with Gregg Jakobson, a would-be actor and talent scout who was married to Lou Costello's daughter. Costello's only son, by the way, Lou Jr., drowned in the family pool on November 4, 1943, just before reaching his first birthday.

The trio of Wilson, Melcher and Jakobson, who dubbed themselves the "*Golden Penetrators*" (*Wilson referred to himself rather subtly as "The Wood"*), famously forged a close bond with a musician/prophet/penetrator by the name of Charlie Manson. In 1966, Melcher, along with Mark Lindsay of the band Paul Revere and the Raiders, leased and moved into the soon-to-be infamous home at 10050 Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon (*Lindsay would later have the dubious distinction of also living for a time in the other infamous canyon death house, on Wonderland Avenue; Lindsay was also a regular visitor to the Log Cabin*). The two were soon joined by Melcher's girlfriend, actress Candace Bergen. Melcher and Bergen remained in the home until early 1969, frequently entertaining numerous high-profile guests from both the music and film industries.

During the summer of 1968, when Charlie Manson and numerous members of his entourage, including Charles "*Tex*" Watson and Dean Moorehouse, were shacking up with Melcher's best buddy, Dennis Wilson, Tex and Dean were known to regularly visit the Melcher/Bergen home on Cielo Drive. Charlie Manson is known to have visited the Melcher home on several occasions as well, and to have occasionally borrowed Melcher's Jaguar. Just after Melcher and Bergen vacated the home, Jakobson reportedly arranged for Moorehouse to live there briefly, before Tate and Polanski took possession in February of 1969. During Moorehouse's stay, Tex, who would later be portrayed as the leader of the Tate and LaBianca hit squads, came calling regularly. His address book would later be found to contain a phone number for a former Polanski residence.

i thought i was charlie

Watson had moved out to LA from Texas in 1966 after opting to drop out of college, which those who knew him viewed as being wildly out of character. By the spring of 1968, when Charles Wat-

son met Charles Manson at Dennis Wilson's home, Tex was the modish co-owner of Crown Wig Creations on the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Through that business enterprise, he had developed extensive Hollywood contacts – contacts that came in handy when he began handling large drug transactions and large piles of cash for Charlie Manson. Tex Watson soon grew so close to Manson that, according to Ed Sanders, he was known to complain at times "*that he actually thought he was Charlie*."

According to Vanity Fair, Tex Watson was also "*a regular patron of the Whisky,*" which isn't too surprising given that Elmer Valentine's club was well known to be a major drug trafficking site during the late 1960s. Watson's frequent sidekick Dean Moorehouse, by the way, hailed from Minot, North Dakota, identified by Maury Terry as the longtime home of a Process Church faction with deep ties to Offutt Air Force Base. Though it is purely speculation, it seems entirely possible that Moorehouse served as a handler for both Charlies – Manson and Watson (*perhaps tellingly, disinformation-peddler Vincent Bugliosi mentions Moorehouse only once in his nearly 700-page treatment of the Manson case, in much the same way that David Crosby ignores Vito Paulekas in his wordy autobiography*).

In the spring of 1969, the trio of Wilson, Melcher and Jakobson got close to Bobby Beausoleil as well. Jakobson made at least two trips to the Gerard Theatrical Agency to hear demo tapes that Bobby had recorded. The agency, headed by Jack Gerard, specialized in supplying topless dancers to seedy clubs, and actors and actresses for porno film shoots. Beausoleil's primary job with the agency was to deliver carloads of girls to the clubs; more than a few of those girls were members of Charlie's Family. In March of 1969, just months before he was arrested for the torture-murder of Gary Hinman, Bobby had signed a songwriting contract with the agency and begun recording demos.

Beausoleil also accompanied Melcher and Jakobson on at least two trips out to the Spahn Movie Ranch, once in May of 1969 and then again the next month. Jakobson was a frequent visitor to Spahn and was known to boast of having held over 100 hours of conversations with the all-knowing prophet known as Charles Manson. Gregg also lobbied NBC to shoot a documentary film about the Manson Family's '*hippie commune*,' and the network was for a time quite interested in the project. Along with Dennis Wilson, Jakobson also arranged for Charlie to record at an unnamed studio in Santa Monica; that session was also attended by Terry Melcher, Bobby Beausoleil and several of the Manson girls.

Lest anyone think otherwise, by the way, the Manson Family certainly had no shortage of talented musicians. Convicted murderer Charles Manson, of course, was widely viewed by his contemporaries in the canyon as a talented singer/songwriter/guitarist. So too was convicted murderer Bobby Beausoleil, who had jammed with Dennis Wilson, played rhythm guitar for the pre-Love lineup known as the Grass Roots, knew Frank Zappa and had visited the Log Cabin, and later composed and recorded the film score for Kenneth Anger's Lucifer Rising. Convicted murderer Patricia Krenwinkle was an accomplished guitarist and songwriter. Convicted murderer Steve "*Clem*" Grogan was a talented musician as well; he later played in the prison band assembled by Beausoleil to record the Lucifer Rising soundtrack. In addition, Family members Brooks Poston and Paul Watkins were accomplished musicians, and Catherine "*Gypsy*" Share was a virtuoso violin player as well as being a singer and occasional actress (*see, for example, Ramrodder, costarring Bobby Beausoleil and filmed partially at – where else? – Spahn Movie Ranch*).

Catherine Share is notable in other ways as well, including her unparalleled feat of raising the bar so high on parental suicides that no one else, even in Laurel Canyon, is likely to be able to

Charles 'Tex' Watson

clear it. Orphaned as a child when both biological parents purportedly committed suicide, Gypsy was adopted by a psychologist and his wife. Her adoptive mother then allegedly committed suicide as well, leaving her to be raised by her adoptive father. Share is also notable for being the oldest of Charlie's girls, nearly twenty-seven at the time of the murders (*most of the others were under twenty-one, and many, including Dean Moorehouse's daughter Ruth Ann "Ouisch" Moorehouse, were minors*). Gypsy lived with Bobby Beausoleil before meeting and living with Manson, and she seemed to serve as a recruiter for both of them.

According to Ed Sanders, Gypsy Share also "*arranged for Paul Rothschild, the producer of The Doors, to hear the family music.*" It seems as though just about everyone had an opportunity to hear the Family's music. Some of it was recorded in Beach Boy Brian Wilson's state-of-the-art home recording studio. Some was recorded by Terry Melcher and Gregg Jakobson at Spahn Ranch using a mobile recording studio. Some was recorded in Santa Monica. By some reports, some was recorded by a major Hollywood studio. Other recordings were likely made as well, though nobody really likes to talk about such things. Gregg Jakobson recorded many of his marathon conversations with Charlie, but as with the demo recordings made by Dennis Wilson, everyone likes to pretend that such recordings were lost or destroyed or never existed.

The Family was filmed at Spahn Ranch by Melcher as well. Family members also shot an extensive amount of film making '*home movies*,' which many witnesses have claimed included Family orgies and ritualized snuff films. A vast amount of NBC camera equipment and film was found to be in the possession of Charlie's motley crew, all of which was claimed to be stolen. It seems likely, however, given the network's known involvement with the Family, that the equipment was provided to them so that they could film their exploits.

When not hanging out with Charlie and Tex and Bobby, Terry Melcher also found time to produce the records that first catapulted the Byrds to fame: "*Mr. Tambourine Man*" and "*Turn, Turn, Turn*." The first, recorded in January 1965 and released a few months later, was the record that announced to the world the arrival of a new breed of music: folk-rock. It was created, simply enough, by borrowing from the songbooks of folk legends (*primarily Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger*) and then playing those songs on amplified equipment.

Dylan himself followed suit not long after, at the Newport Folk Festival in July 1965, much to the consternation of the gathered crowd of folkies.

In Hotel California, Barney Hoskyns writes that the Byrds were, from the very outset, "*conceived as an electric rock and roll group.*" What Hoskyns doesn't really clarify though is who exactly it was that initially conceived of this hugely influential band in those terms. Surely it wasn't the band members themselves who decided that they were going to pioneer a new musical genre, since they probably had their hands full with just learning to play their instruments.

It would probably be slightly more accurate to say that the Byrds appear to have been initially conceived as an electric folk-rock group. By July of 1966, however, when the band released its third album, featuring the Gene Clark-penned "*Eight Miles High*," it had morphed into something different and by doing so helped pioneer another genre of music – psychedelic rock. With the later addition of Gram Parsons and the growing influence of Chris Hillman, the Byrds would next morph into a country-rock band, thus helping to spawn that genre of music as well.

According to rock 'n' roll legend, the first two Byrds to get together were James Joseph McGuinn III and Harold Eugene Clark. McGuinn hailed from Chicago, the son of best-selling authors James and Dorothy McGuinn. Jim had played with Bobby Darin, the Limeliters, and the Chad Mitchell Trio, and he was considered to be a talented guitarist. In 1962, he left the Chad Mitchell Trio and worked for a time in New York City as a studio musician – before hearing the call that so many others seemed to hear and making his way to Los Angeles. Once there, he wasted no time hooking up with Gene Clark.

Clark had been born in Tipton, Missouri, the second oldest in a family of thirteen siblings. An undeniably talented songwriter and vocalist, Clark cut his first record with a local rock 'n' roll combo when he was just thirteen years old. He later joined the New Christy Minstrels, a vocal ensemble known during his tenure primarily for the hit song "*Green, Green*." Like so many others, however, Gene soon found himself packing his bags for – where else? – Los Angeles, where he met up with the recently-arrived Jim McGuinn. The newly-formed folk duo soon added a third voice to the mix – our old friend David Crosby, who had formerly been a vocalist with Les Baxter's Balladeers.

Crosby brought in manager Jim Dickson, with whom he had done some solo sessions in 1963. The year before that, Dickson had produced a self-titled album for a band known as the Hillmen, featuring a young mandolin player out of San Diego named Chris Hillman. Hillman had cut his first album, with a band known as the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, while still in high school. He was a highly regarded young bluegrass musician and was generally considered to be a virtuoso mandolin player – which I guess is why Jim Dickson cast him to play the part of the bass player in the world's first folk-rock band. And as we already know, Hillman had just lucked upon luxurious living accommodations right in the heart of what was to become the music community's epicenter, so he was all set to become a rock star.

Raised on a ranch in San Diego, Hillman had traveled alone to Berkeley when he was just fifteen, ostensibly to take private Mandolin lessons. At about that same time, his father had – wait for it – reportedly committed suicide. Those two closely aligned events would have, I would guess, a profound impact on the young musician.

Hillman would ultimately become a skilled bass player and a major figure in the Laurel Canyon-spawned country-rock movement. Like many others of that bent, Hillman had been a huge fan of Spade Cooley during his formative years and he later cited Cooley as a major influence on his own musical direction. I'm guessing that most readers are not familiar with the story of the "*King of Western Swing*," which is kind of a shame because as stories go, it's a pretty good one, so let's digress here briefly and meet the man who was frequently cited as one of the forefathers of country-rock.

donnell clyde cooley - spade

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Donnell Clyde "Spade" Cooley was a popular local musician and bandleader. His weekly shows at the Redondo Beach Pier (*which was close enough to my childhood home, by the way, that my friends and I occasionally rode our bikes there*) could draw as many as 10,000 appreciative fans, few of whom knew of his alcoholism, violent temper, or prior arrest for attempted rape. His popularity ultimately landed him his own local television show, The Spade Cooley Hour. His career, however, came to an abrupt end on April 3, 1961, when he tortured and murdered his young wife, Ella Mae Cooley, while forcing his fourteen-year-old daughter to watch in horror.

According to court transcripts, Ella Mae had been spending a considerable amount of time in the company of two men, identified as Luther Jackson and Bud Davenport, both of whom worked in the sprawling, CIA-infested medical research facility at UCLA. On the day of her death, Ella Mae had made the rather bold decision to inform Spade

that the two men had initiated her into a '*free love*' cult and that she had decided to give up her family and all her possessions to join the group, which was in the process of buying land near the ocean to build and operate a private compound. Spade Cooley's response to his wife's declaration was to brutally beat, stomp and strangle her to death, but only after repeatedly burning her with a lit cigarette. All of this was witnessed by daughter Melody, who had been told by her father that "*now you're going to watch me kill this whore*." After doing just that, Spade then asked his daughter if she thought that Ella Mae was really dead, adding, "*Well, let's see if she is*." He then proceeded to burn her lifeless body repeatedly with another lit cigarette, until he apparently was satisfied that she was indeed dead.

Unlike so many other celebrity homicide suspects, Cooley was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to serve a life sentence. He was sent to the rather notorious Vacaville facility where he served eight years before being offered early parole. Just before his scheduled release, he arranged a November 23, 1969 comeback concert in Oakland for which his captors had agreed to release him on a three-day pass. The concert was reportedly a huge success and it looked as though Cooley's star was about to shine once again upon his pending release from prison. But that's not quite how this story ends; instead, Cooley walked back to his dressing room right after the show and promptly dropped dead, thus ending the saga of Spade Cooley and allowing us to return to where we left off …

… actually, let's take one more quick detour here and note that not long after Spade Cooley was scheduled for release, another peripheral character in this story decided that it might be a good idea to whack his wife as well. "Humble" Harve Miller was a popular DJ on LA's #1 pop music station during that era, KHJ on the AM dial. During the latter half of the 1960s, Miller was yet another of the players who helped launch the careers of the Laurel Canyon bands, by getting their new singles on the radio. But then he, like Cooley, killed his wife and was sent to prison. Also like Cooley, he was granted early release. But unlike Spade, Miller successfully resumed his career. And now, at long last, we can return to our story …

By mid-1964, the nucleus of what would become the Byrds had formed with the bonding of McGuinn and Clark. Between the two of them, they would provide the band with its signature 12-string guitar sound, its two lead vocalists, and (*in the early years, at least*) its best songwriters. Along then came David Crosby, who added little more than harmony vocals, at least on the first two albums, but who seems to have largely hijacked the band with the help of manager Jim Dickson, who added fake bass player (*but real musician*) Chris Hillman. Crosby then rounded out the band by adding fake drummer Michael Clarke.

Clarke had been born Michael Dick in Spokane, Washington. At

Spade Cooley

seventeen, Dick ran away from home and hitchhiked to the land of enchantment known as California, apparently becoming Michael Clarke along the way. The year was 1963. According to rock history as told by David Crosby, Clarke and Crosby met in Big Sur, which coincidentally happens to be the location of the notorious Esalen Institute (*where CSNY would play some years later*). A year later, the vagrant teenager with no drumming experience would find himself cast to play the role of the drummer in the band designed to be America's answer to the Beatles. According to Crosby, Clarke's first LA address was the home of Terry Melcher.

The band, now complete, first dubbed themselves the Jet Set and then the Beefeaters, even recording a less-then-memorable single under the latter moniker, before finally settling on the Byrds. Before the end of 1964, Jim Dickson had signed the band to a deal with Columbia Records. As Barney Hoskyns recounts in Waiting for the Sun, "*The obvious ineptitude of Michael Clarke and shakiness of most of the others was still a problem when Jim Dickson got the band signed to Columbia in November. [They were] Assigned to staff producer Terry Melcher …*"

That assignment, it would seem, was a rather fortuitous one given that the fledgling band's rehearsal space just happened to be in the very same basement studio that Melcher snuck off to while in high school. Just two months after signing with Columbia, the band, or rather its surrogates, were already in the studio recording "*Mr. Tambourine Man,*" at the insistence of Jim Dickson. Despite the objections of various band members, Dickson reportedly pushed hard for the song to be the band's first single. On March 26, 1965, just two months after pretending to lay down the instrumental tracks for "*Mr. Tambourine Man*," the Byrds played their first real live show, as the first act at the refurbished and reopened Ciro's nightclub.

I obviously wasn't there so I can't say for sure, but I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that a band whose entire rhythm section was just learning to play their instruments probably did not put on a very compelling performance. The Byrds apparently played one other live show before the Ciro's opening, though the nature of that show appears to be in dispute (*or perhaps there were two previous shows*). According to Jim Dickson, "*The Byrds first public gig was booked by Lenny Bruce's mother, Sally Marr. She got them a job at Los Angeles City College, noon assembly, for a half hour.*" According to Carl Franzoni and various others, however, it was Vito Paulekas who booked the Byrds' first live show, at a rented hall on Melrose Avenue just a day or two before the show at Ciro's.

In any event, "*Mr. Tambourine Man*" was released about a month after the band had its big public debut at Ciro's and the LA music scene would never be the same again. Before long, clubs big and small were popping up all along the fabled Sunset Strip and bands

were spilling out of Laurel Canyon to play them. As Terry Melcher recalled, "*kids came from everywhere. It just happened. One day you couldn't drive anymore. It was, like, overnight – you couldn't drive on the Strip*."

That would soon change though. By the summer of 1967, the mythical Summer of Love, the club scene on the Strip was quickly dying. It had been killed, deliberately or not, by some of the key players who had created it: Terry Melcher, producer of the scene's first band; Lou Adler, business partner of club owner Elmer Valentine; and John Phillips, leader of The Mamas and the Papas and composer of such ditties as "*California Dreaming*" and "*If You're Going to San Francisco.*" It was the Monterey Pop Festival, you see, held on June 16-18, 1967, that killed the Sunset Strip scene. The bands that had filled the clubs became, literally overnight, too big to play such intimate venues. Over the course of the next decade, Laurel Canyon bands quickly moved from clubs to concert halls to massive sports arenas. But here we are, I suppose, getting ahead of ourselves.

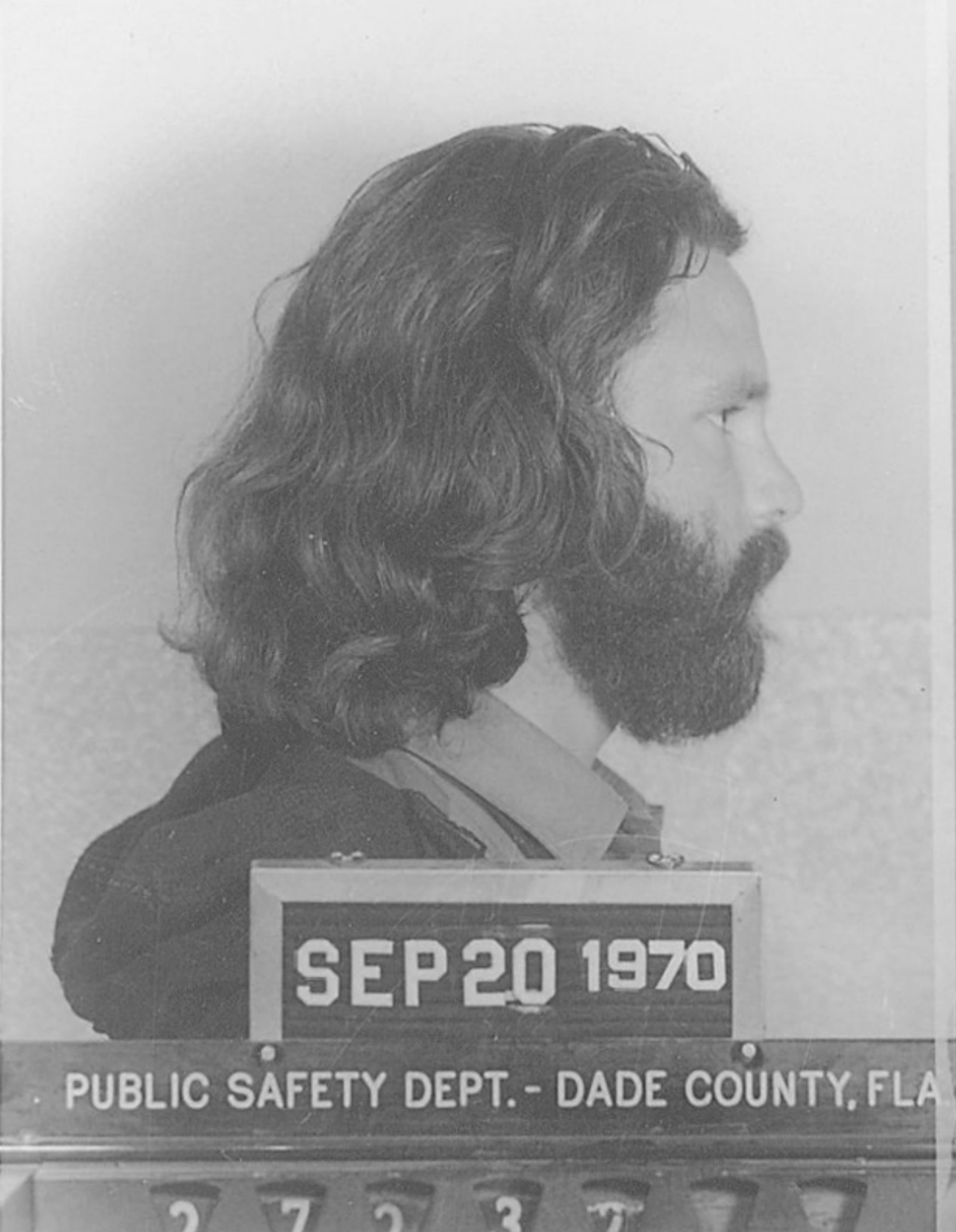
As for the Byrds, they carried on for a good many years, albeit with numerous personnel changes. First out was the man who many feel was the most talented member of the group, Gene Clark, who dropped out in March of 1966, just one year after the band had first taken the stage at Ciro's. Clark was also the first original Byrd to pass away, on May 24, 1991, at just 46 years of age, reportedly due to a bleeding ulcer. Two-and-a-half-years later, on December 19, 1993, Michael Clarke died as well when his liver failed. Both deaths were attributed to chronic alcoholism.

Jim McGuinn, who remained a Byrd through numerous band lineups, joined the Subud religious sect in 1965. Two years later, upon the advice of the cult's founder, he changed his name to Roger. A decade later, he became a born-again Christian. In a similar vein, Chris Hillman became an Evangelical Christian in the 1980s, but then later switched to the Greek Orthodox faith. Hillman played in various Byrds lineups, with Gram Parson's Flying Burrito Brothers, and in David Geffen's failed second attempt at creating a supergroup, this one known as Souther, Hillman, Furay. David Crosby, of course, left the Byrds and became 1/3 of David Geffen's first supergroup, Crosby, Stills & Nash. These days he primarily spends his time inseminating lesbians and occasionally reuniting with former bandmates.

Jim Dickson and Terry Melcher continued to work with some of the Byrds, particularly Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman. Melcher formed a particularly close bond with his fellow '*trust-fund kid*,' Gram Parsons, as did Melcher's sometime sidekick, John Phillips. Both Melcher and Phillips, of course, knew Charlie Manson (*Melcher raved about him to Ned Doheny*), whose former prison buddy, Phil Kaufman, was Parsons' road manager (*and cremator*). I'm pretty sure though that I already mentioned that, but what I haven't yet worked into this narrative is that the Doors' road manager, Bill Siddons, was once a paramour of Mansonite Lynette "*Squeaky*" Fromme.

The Family's fingerprints, as always, can be found in nearly every nook and cranny of the Laurel Canyon scene.

The Family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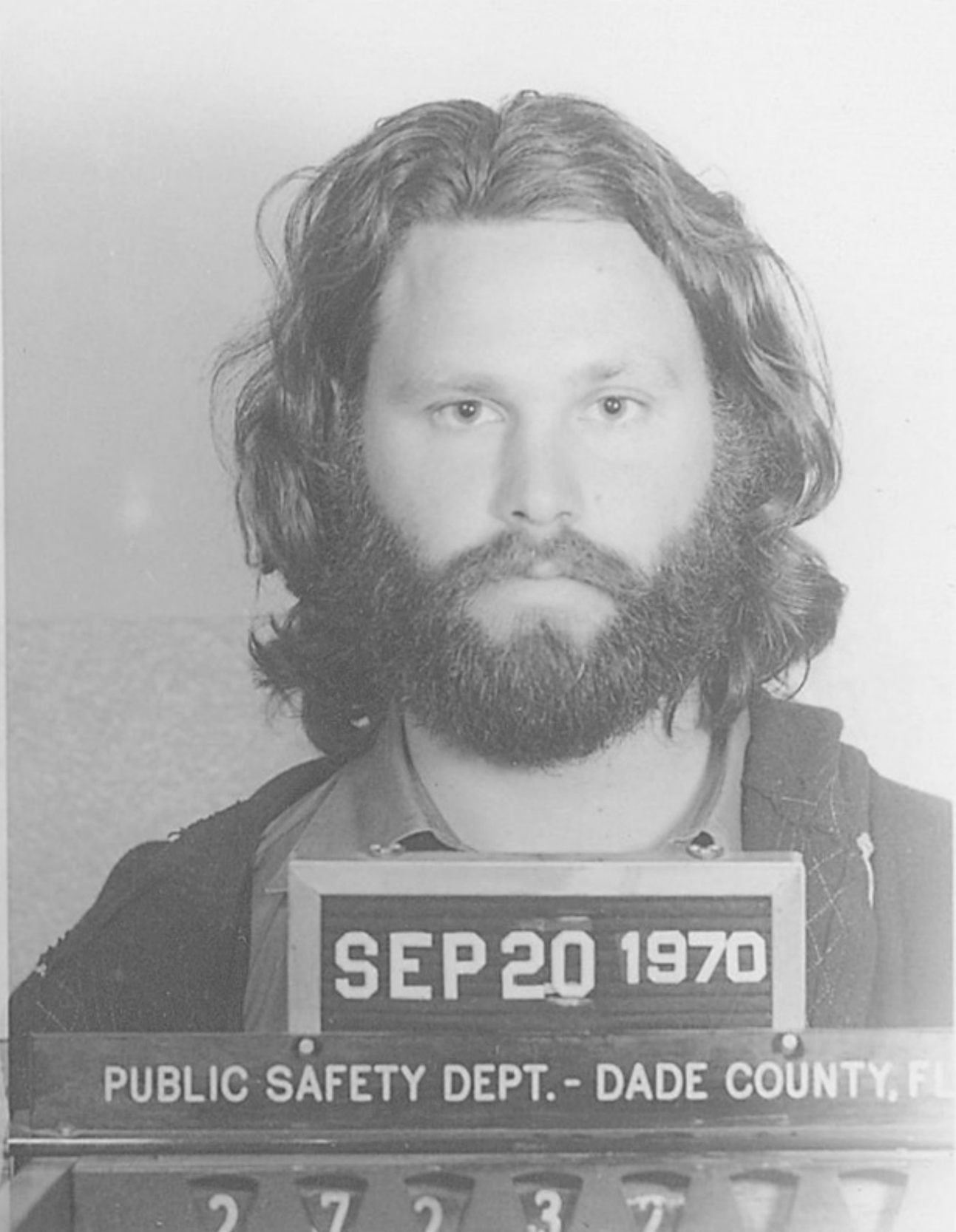

SEP 20 1970
PUBLIC SAFETY DEPT. - DADE COUNTY, F

"*No one could recall ever seeing or hearing about Gram being involved in a protest of any sort.*"

Author Ben Fong Torres, who interviewed scores of people close to Gram Parsons while researching Hickory Wind

Timing is a curious thing. When I first started this series in May of 2008, the fact that Jim Morrison's father had served as the commander of the ships involved in the Gulf of Tonkin '*incident*' had gone virtually unreported for some four-and-a-half decades. Readers were shocked – shocked, I tell you! – when I began this series by trotting out that revelation. Some even accused me of making it up, or of somehow twisting the facts.

But as fate would have it, as December of 2008 rolled around, the mainstream media was suddenly awash with reports of the unusual Morrison family connection. On December 8, for example, the Los Angeles Times carried a report on Admiral George Stephen Morrison, described therein as "*a retired Navy rear admiral and the father of the late rock icon Jim Morrison.*" According to the Times report, "*Morrison had a long career that included serving as operations officer aboard the aircraft carrier Midway and commanding the fleet during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, which led to an escalation of American involvement in Vietnam.*"

The very next day, on December 9, the New York Times followed suit with a report by William Grimes: "*George S. Morrison, who commanded the fleet during the Gulf of Tonkin incident that led to an escalation of the Vietnam War and whose son Jim was the lead singer of the Doors ... Aboard the flagship carrier Bon Homme Richard, Mr. Morrison commanded American naval forces in the gulf when the destroyer Maddox engaged three North Vietnamese torpedo boats on Aug. 2, 1964. A skirmish and confused reports of a second engagement two days later led President Lyndon B. Johnson to order airstrikes against North Vietnam and to request from Congress what became known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, allowing him to carry out further military operations without declaring war.*"

Mr. Grimes has penned a rather charitable account of the Tonkin Gulf incident, to be sure, but what is of far more interest here is the fact that the media is talking about the Morrison/Tonkin Gulf/Doors connection at all. What makes it okay to do so now, it would appear, is the fact that Admiral Morrison exited this world on November 17, 2008, at the ripe old age of 89. His death was reportedly due to unspecified injuries sustained in a fall. According to his obituaries, his distinguished career included raining bombs down on Japanese civilians and Pacific Islanders during the final year of World War II, and serving as "*an instructor for secret nuclear-weapons projects in Albuquerque.*"

On December 7, the day before George Morrison's name turned up in the LA Times' obituaries, another key name from the Laurel Canyon saga appeared there as well: Elmer Valentine, co-owner of the hottest clubs on the Strip in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the Whisky-A-Go-Go, the Roxy, and the Rainbow. Valentine died of unspecified causes on December 3, 2008, at the age of 85. On December 9, the New York Times ran his obituary right alongside that of Morrison. Valentine was therein characterized as "*a self-described crooked cop who fled Chicago to start a new life on the Sunset Strip.*"

Some scribes, I suppose, would find it a bit disconcerting to find that some of the characters in their work-in-progress had suddenly started dropping dead. After all, the cause of death in both cases is a bit fuzzy, and Morrison dropped just four days after Part 11 was posted (*on my website*) and Valentine followed suit 6 days after Part 12 went up. But they were both quite elderly, of course, so maybe it was just their time to go.

a whole lot of curious deaths

Anyway, the real focus of this chapter is singer/songwriter/guitarist/keyboardist Gram Parsons, and the Gram Parsons story, as it turns out, is essentially a microcosm of the Laurel Canyon story. Most of the classic elements are present and accounted for: the royal bloodlines, the not-so-well-hidden intelligence connections, the occult overtones, the extravagantly wealthy family background, an incinerated house or two, and, of course, a whole lot of curious deaths. Without further adieu then, let's get to know a little more about Mr. Parsons.

First of all, let's begin with the obvious: Gram Parsons was far from being the biggest star to emerge from the Laurel Canyon scene. In his short lifetime, he failed to achieve any significant level of commercial success. None of his albums, whether recorded solo or with the International Submarine Band, the Byrds, or the Flying Burrito Brothers, climbed very high on the sales charts. But to many fans and musicians alike, he is considered a hugely influential and tragically overlooked figure.

It is safe to say that Parsons does not have nearly the number of fans that, say, David Crosby or Frank Zappa have. Compared to contemporaries who died during the same era and at roughly the same age – artists like Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix – Parsons is all but unknown. But the fans that he does have tend to be particularly rabid ones, and if you happen to be one of them, you might want to skip this chapter. And the next, actually, because this is kind of a long story.

We begin back about, oh, a thousand years ago, with Ferdinand the Great, the first King of Castille on the Iberian Peninsula. It is to him that the wealthy Connor family claims their family lineage can be traced. Also in the family tree was King Edward II of England, son of Edward I and Eleanor of Castille. According to some sources, Eddie II was murdered by having a red-hot iron rod shoved up his ass, though most of his loyal subjects probably didn't shed many tears. Bringing the royal bloodline to America was one Colonel George Reade, born in the UK in 1608 and married in Yorktown, Pennsylvania sometime thereafter.

the Admiral (far left, above) and his son, the Rock Star (left)

Reade's offspring would ultimately spawn Ingram Cecil Connor, Jr., a well-to-do gent who settled in Columbia, Tennessee. Like his father before him, Cecil attended Columbia Military Academy. In May 1940, at the outset of World War II, he then enlisted in the US Army Air Force as a 2nd Lieutenant. In March of 1941, Cecil, who during the war would become known as "*Coon Dog*," though no one seems to remember why, was shipped off to Hawaii. Nine months later, of course, Pearl Harbor came under attack by Japanese bombers.

Not to worry though – Cecil was never in harm's way, having opted to forgo living in officer's quarters on the military base in favor of staying at a luxurious, massive estate near Diamond Head owned by uber-wealthy heiress Barbara Hutton. Hutton, for those who don't know, was the granddaughter of Frank Woolworth, the founder of the Woolworth's five-and-dime store chain. She was also the daughter of Franklyn Laws Hutton, a co-founder of E.F. Hutton, one of the nation's most prestigious brokerage firms until it ran afoul of the law for such crimes as check kiting, money laundering and mail fraud. Barbara was also the niece of Marjory Post Hutton, the daughter of C.W. Post, founder of what would become General Foods.

Milton Hershey (at far left, center and right)

Like so many of the other characters who have populated this story (*including Gram Parsons*), Barbara was traumatized in childhood by the alleged suicide of a parent. According to news reports, it was 5-year-old Barbara who discovered her mother Edna's lifeless body in May of 1917. An empty bottle of strychnine was reportedly recovered by police from a nearby bathroom. There was no autopsy performed and no official inquest was ever conducted, as would be expected when an extremely wealthy person dies under questionable circumstances.

In 1930, just after the onset of the last Great Depression, Barbara was thrown a lavish debutante ball attended by those at the very top of the food chain, including members of the Astor and Rockefeller families. The next year, she inherited a fortune estimated to be worth the equivalent of $1 billion today. She was just nineteen at the time. Two years later, she received further inheritance that raised her net worth to an estimated $2-$2.5 billion (*in today's dollars*). Much of the rest of the country was busily wallowing in abject poverty.

Ms Hutton lived a very troubled life, with numerous failed marriages and relationships. One of her many paramours was Phillip van Rensselaer, who later penned a book about her life which he entitled Million Dollar Baby. Van Rensselaer, it will be recalled, was from the same family tree as Laurel Canyon's own David Crosby – the man whom Gram Parsons would briefly replace in the Byrds. And that, boys and girls, brings us back to our man-of-the-hour.

As World War II drug on, Ingram Cecil Connor, Jr. worked his way up the chain of command to the rank of Major. In the Pacific theater of operations, he was a decorated hero and a squadron commander who flew numerous combat missions. After the war, he continued to serve in the Air Force at a base in Bartow, Florida, very near the Snively family home in Winter Haven. On March 22, 1945, the spring equinox, "*Coon Dog*" Connor married Avis Snively.

The Snively clan had first come to America circa 1700, about a century after the arrival of the man who spawned the Connor clan. According to historical records and genealogical charts, Johann Jacob Schnebele, a Swiss Mennonite, was born in 1659. When in his late 50s, around 1715 or shortly thereafter, he ventured across the Atlantic and settled near Cornwall, Pennsylvania. Johann died and was buried in 1743 near Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Brought over with him to America was his son Jacob, born on the winter solstice of 1694, and his daughter Maria, born in 1702. In 1724, in Mannheim, Pennsylvania, Maria Schnebele married the son of immigrants Hans Hersche and Anna Geunder. That son had Americanized his name and become known as Andrew Hershey. The Schnebele name was likewise Americanized to Snavely (*or Snively*). The Hershey and Snavely clans would continue to happily intermarry, ultimately producing, in 1857, Milton Snavely Hershey, the son of Henry Hershey and Fanny Snavely.

Milton S. Hershey, of course, would go on to found the world's largest producer of chocolate confections. Less well known is that Hershey failed miserably in his first several attempts to launch a candy company, in Philadelphia, Chicago and New York City. All of those ventures were financed with Snively/Snavely family money. Hershey ultimately succeeded in launching the successful Lancaster Caramel Company in 1883. In 1900, he sold the caramel company to focus exclusively on chocolate confections. With proceeds from that sale, he purchased 40,000 acres of undeveloped land and built not only the world's largest chocolate facility, but an entire company town.

The moral of this story, in case you missed it, is that without the Schnebele/Snavely/Snively family fortune, there never would have been any such thing as a Hershey bar or a town known as Hershey, Pennsylvania.

As for Maria's brother, Jacob Schnebele, he died in August of 1766 in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, but not before fathering an astounding nineteen children. One of those was son Andrew, who himself fathered fourteen kids. From that branch of the family tree would emerge John Andrew "*Papa John*" Snively, born in 1888, who headed off to Florida in the early 1900s to seek his fortune. By the 1950s, Snively Groves was the largest shipper of fresh fruit in the state of Florida.

Avis Snively, who exchanged vows with Ingram Cecil Connor, Jr., was the daughter of Papa John. On November 5, 1946, Coon Dog and Avis gave birth to their first child and only son, Ingram Cecil Connor III, later known as Gram Parsons. Soon after, the family relocated to Waycross, Georgia, where, as with Winter Haven, the Snively family owned a massive amount of land devoted to citrus fruit production. It was there that young Ingram "*Gram*" Connor was raised.

The Connor family home in Waycross, as would be expected, was large and luxurious, and there were numerous servants in attendance, all of whom had considerably more skin pigmentation than did the Connors. Coon Dog and Avis entertained frequently, and both were well known to be heavy drinkers; there were hushed rumors that they were '*swingers*' as well. As Gram's younger sister, known as Little Avis, would later recall, "*Things were mighty strange around the house.*"

In September of 1957, when Gram was not yet eleven, he was sent off to attend the Bowles School, a combination prep school and military academy in Jacksonville, Florida. On his entry questionnaire, he was asked for his top three college choices; Gram chose Annapolis, West Point, and Georgia Tech. While attending Bowles, he became a member of the Centurions, the school's version of an elite fraternity.

The following year, just before Christmas 1958, Ingram Cecil "*Coon Dog*" Connor, Jr. was found sprawled across his bed in the family home, a bullet hole in his right temple. A .38 handgun was found nearby. There was no note to be found. Cecil's brother Tom had visited just the month before, around Thanksgiving, and Coon Dog had told him that he'd never been happier and that life with Avis was wonderful. Curiously, his death was initially ruled to be accidental.

Just ten months before Cecil's death, Papa John Snively, Avis' dad, had also died, and now she found herself with both of the men in her life gone. And yet, according to a family member, she never appeared to grieve and she displayed a "*total lack of remorse*" over anything she may have done to drive Coon Dog to allegedly commit suicide (*by some reports, she had been having an affair*).

Some six months after Cecil's death, Avis, Gram and Little Avis boarded a train for a cross-country trip. They were gone the entire summer. Not long after returning, the family moved from the house that Cecil had died in and Avis soon met Robert Ellis Parsons, who owned a business that ostensibly specialized in leasing heavy construction equipment. Parson's clients, curiously enough, happened to be in Cuba, then under the brutal hand of Batista, and in various South American countries that were also under the thumb of US-installed dictators

It is unclear, by the way, where the "*Ellis*" in Parsons name comes from, so it would probably be irresponsible to mention the Ellis family that is an intermarried branch of the Bush family, but with the Cuba connection and all, it's hard for the mind not to wander there.

The Snively clan took an immediate dislike to Parsons, who was described by one family member as a "*greedy son of a bitch.*" Nevertheless, Avis quickly married him and Bob Parsons quickly took control of her life. One of his first moves was to adopt Gram and Avis, even going so far as to have new birth certificates drawn up listing him as their biological father (*how exactly does one go about doing that, by the way?*) He also promptly impregnated Avis and convinced her to file a $1.5 million lawsuit against her brother, John, Jr., and her sister, Evalyn. The suit was settled out of court, with Avis receiving an unspecified number of citrus groves, but the real repercussions would be felt some fifteen years later with the bankruptcy of much of the family business in 1974.

In 1960, just a year after marrying, Bob and Avis added daughter Diane to the family. Also added was eighteen-year-old babysitter Bonnie, whom Bob immediately began an affair with, which apparently was not a very well-kept secret. What was a somewhat better kept secret is that, in the early 1960s, following the Cuban revolution, Robert Ellis Parsons became involved in the '*Cuban cause*,' which is to say that he had very close ties to the leaders of an exile group that was being trained in Polk County, Florida to overthrow the Cuban government.

On one occasion (*or at least one occasion that is acknowledged*), he brought young Gram along to visit the group's training camp. As luck would have it, a team from Life magazine happened to also be there that day and Gram – wouldn't you know it? – was photographed at the camp. When Avis was informed of that development, she worked quickly to insure that those photos were never published. To this day, they have never surfaced.

During that same era, Bob Parsons converted a downtown warehouse that he owned into a teen nightclub to showcase the talents of his '*son*,' Ingram "*Gram*" Parsons, who sang and played key-

Brandon DeWilde

boards and the guitar. Circa 1963, Gram got a folk combo together that was known as the Shilos. During the summer of 1964, the summer before Gram's senior year of high school, the band spent a month in New York. During that brief time, Parsons met and bonded with Brandon DeWilde, Richie Furay, and John Phillips, then of the Journeymen. He would meet up with all three again a couple years later in Laurel Canyon.

Despite his early preference for Annapolis or West Point, Gram applied to Harvard and Johns Hopkins. Despite decidedly unimpressive grades and test scores, he was accepted by Harvard, purportedly due to an essay he submitted that he likely didn't actually write. During his last year of high school, Gram and the Shilos booked an hour gig at the campus radio station at Bob Jones University … yes, that Bob Jones University.

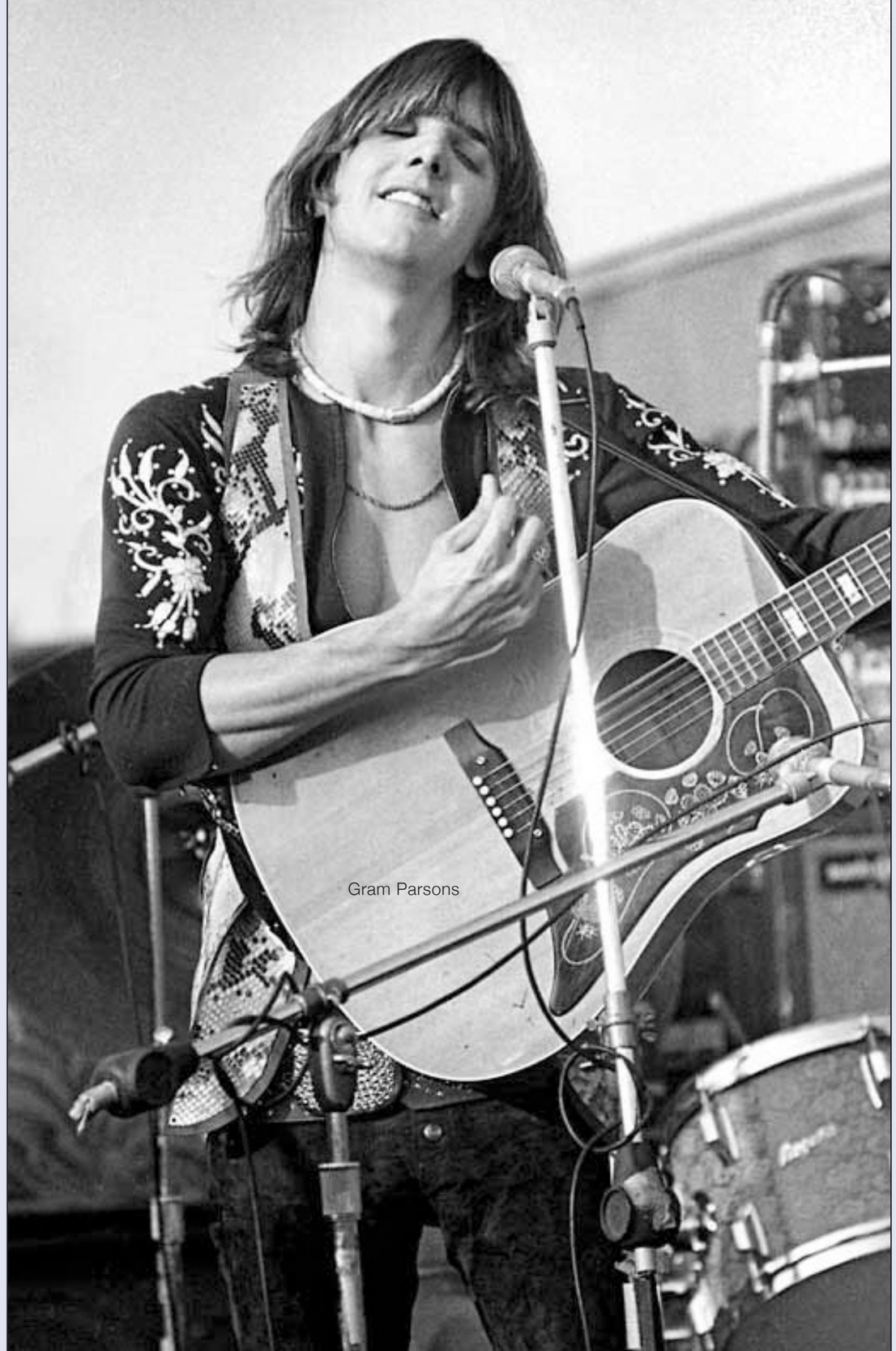
At his high school graduation in June of 1965, Gram was in his cap and gown and all set to proceed with the ceremonies when he was pulled aside and informed that his mother Avis had suddenly passed away. Seemingly unaffected, he chose to participate in the ceremonies. A classmate and friend has said that there was no sign that anything was troubling Gram that day as he went through the graduation rituals.

Avis had died in the hospital, reportedly of alcohol poisoning, right after Bob Parsons had smuggled her in a bottle of scotch. Gram's mother was just forty-two at the time of her death. His father, Coon Dog, had only made it to the age of forty-one. Neither of their kids, Gram or Little Avis, would make it even that far.

Soon after his mother's death, Gram received a draft notice from the Selective Service. Not to worry though – Bob quickly got him a 4-F deferment and Gram happily went off to Harvard, enrolling in September of 1965. By February of 1966, just five months later, Gram had had enough of Harvard and he withdrew. According to some sources, he never really went to Harvard at all, but rather spent all his time taking in the folk music scene in Cambridge and putting his own band together.

Gram arrived at Harvard a few years too late to catch the peak of the folk music scene in Cambridge. In the early 1960s, the college town had been one of the cradles of the resurgent folk movement, hosting such luminaries as Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Bob Neuwirth, Tom Rush, Pete Seeger, Richard and Mimi Farina, Geoff and Maria Muldaur, Eric Andersen and Joni Mitchell.

The epicenter of the Cambridge folk scene was the legendary Club 47, opened in 1958 as a jazz and blues venue. A very young Joan Baez, whose reputedly CIA-connected father worked at nearby MIT, was the first folkie to take the stage, not long after


Gram Parsons

the club opened. Dylan reportedly first performed there in 1961, taking the stage between the billed acts. The scene hit its peak in the summer of 1962, which was the Cambridge equivalent of the Haight's Summer of Love.
The Cambridge scene, and others in Greenwich Village and elsewhere, were necessary precursors to the Laurel Canyon scene. The canyon scene was essentially created by taking the music of that earlier scene, particularly the work of Dylan and Seeger, and mixing it with the instrumentation being utilized across the pond by a band known as the Beatles. It is entirely fitting then that, as with Laurel Canyon, the Cambridge scene came complete with its own resident psycho killer.

In addition to the folk scene hitting its peak in the summer of 1962, something else newsworthy happened in Cambridge that summer: a lot of women started turning up dead – six of them in that first summer alone, and seven more over the next couple of years. And as Susan Kelly noted in The Boston Stranglers, one of those victims was killed right across the street from Club 47: "*Just across the street from [victim Beverly Samans'] apartment, a very young and not yet famous Joan Baez and an equally youthful and unknown Bob Dylan were playing to reverently hushed audiences at the Club 47*."

As the title of Kelly's book implies, there actually was no such person as the Boston Strangler, but that didn't stop authorities and the media from pinning all the murders on one Albert DeSalvo, far better known as the Boston Strangler. And so it was that just as Laurel Canyon would have Charlie Manson as its unofficial mascot, the earlier scene in Cambridge had Albert DeSalvo. And neither of them, curiously enough, appear to have actually committed any murders, though a whole lot of people certainly did get murdered.

Folkie Richard Farina, by the way, was the husband of Mimi Baez, Joan's younger sister. Farina had attended Cornell University as an engineering major. Cornell also happened to be where Joan and Mimi's dad, Albert Baez, conducted classified research. Albert Baez tended to move around a lot, popping up for varying periods of time at Stanford, UC Berkeley, Cornell, and MIT, all of which have been repeatedly identified as hotbeds of MK-ULTRA research.

Albert Baez also traveled abroad, to France, Switzerland, and, in 1951, to Baghdad, Iraq, where he spent a year purportedly teaching physics and building a physics laboratory at the University of Baghdad. 1951 also happened to be the year that Mossadegh was duly elected in neighboring Iran and the CIA immediately began planning a coup to oust him, but I'm sure that that is just a coincidence.

Anyway, Farina married Mimi when he was twenty-six and she was just seventeen. The two of them, along with Joan, became stars of the Cambridge folk music scene, which they were introduced to when their dad moved the family to Boston in 1958 when he went to work at MIT. Richard and Mimi's marriage was a short one, alas, as Richard Farina was killed in a motorcycle accident in Carmel, California, on, of all days, April 30, 1966. On that very same day, in nearby San Francisco, Anton Szandor LaVey declared it to be the dawn of the Age of Satan.

But perhaps I've gotten sidetracked here …

During Gram's brief time at Harvard, he began gathering together what would become the International Submarine Band. When he dropped out in early 1966, he and his new bandmates moved to the Bronx in New York, where Gram rented an 11-room party house where marijuana and LSD flowed freely. One unofficial member of his band was child-actor-turned-aspiring-musician Brandon DeWilde, known in the 1950s as "*the king of child actors.*" Parsons and DeWilde worked together on demo tapes during their time in New York.

In November/December 1966, nine months after leaving Harvard for New York, Gram ventured out to California. While there, he met a certain Nancy Ross, who at the time was living with David Crosby. In Ben Fong-Torres' Hickory Wind, Ross provides some interesting biographical details: "*I grew up with David Crosby here in town … I was thirteen when we met. David and I were part of the debutante set … My father was a captain in the Royal Air Force of England … I married Eleanor Roosevelt's grandson, Rex, at sixteen, seventeen. I was still married to Rex when I was with David … The marriage lasted a couple of years. I got an apartment and started designing restaurants for Elmer Valentine of Whisky-a-Go-Go*."

Gram Parsons & the Rolling Stones

At age nineteen, Ross went with Crosby "*up to his little bachelor apartment, where I drew pentagrams on the wall*." Soon after, Crosby bought a house on Beverly Glen and Ross moved in with him. That is where Gram Parsons found Nancy Ross and stole her away from David Crosby: "*Brandon DeWilde, who was a good friend of David's and Peter Fonda's, brought Gram up to our Beverly Glen house one Christmas time*." According to Nancy, Gram quickly stole her heart.

Shortly after, in early 1967, Parsons permanently relocated to Los Angeles with his band in tow. According to Fong-Torres, Gram – who received up to $100,000 a year from his trust fund, a considerable amount of money in the mid-1960s – "*found a house for the rest of the band on Willow Glen Avenue, off Laurel Canyon Boulevard and just north of Sunset.*" He and Nancy found an apartment together nearby.

Meanwhile, back home, Bob Parsons had married Bonnie shortly after the death of Avis, and the newlywed couple had then moved with Little Avis and Diane to New Orleans. Back in Waycross, the Connor family home that had been abandoned after Coon Dog's (*alleged*) suicide had been occupied since 1960 by the family of Sheriff Robert E. Lee. In late 1968, on the eve of the election that put Richard Nixon in the White House, the stately home exploded from within and caught fire. The cause of the explosion was never determined.

Gram Parsons • November 5, 1946 – September 19, 1973

Oh, and as I watched him on the stage
My hands were clenched in fists of rage
No angel born in hell
Could break that Satan's spell
And as the flames climbed high into the night
To light the sacrificial rite
I saw Satan laughing with delight
The day the music died

– Don McLean, American Pie

Once ensconced in the hills above Los Angeles, Gram Parsons and his band began recording what would prove to be their only album, Safe at Home, which some pop music historians regard as the first country-rock album, but others regard as a straight country album performed by guys who look like they should be playing in a rock band. Whatever the case, by the time the album was released, in 1968, Gram had disbanded the International Submarine Band and unofficially joined the Byrds, replacing the recently departed David Crosby.

Parsons' time with the Byrds was rather brief, just four to five months, after which he was replaced by virtuoso guitarist Clarence White, who had been part of the Cambridge folk scene. Despite his brief tenure, Parsons is credited with having a major influence on the album that the band produced during that period, Sweetheart of the Rodeo, which is also regarded by some music aficionados as the first true country-rock album.

Soon after leaving the Byrds, Parsons ran into Richie Furay, who was casting about for a new band after the breakup of Laurel Canyon's own Buffalo Springfield. Gram and Furay considered working together but quickly realized that they wanted to go in different musical directions, so Furay went to work putting Poco together while Parsons assembled the Flying Burrito Brothers. By 1969, Gram's new band had taken shape, with Gram supplying lead vocals and guitar, Chris Hillman also on guitar, Chris Etheridge on bass, and "*Sneaky Pete*" Kleinow on pedal steel guitar. With various other local musicians sitting in, the band recorded and released The Gilded Palace of Sin, which is probably also regarded by some as the first true country-rock album. Byrd Michael Clarke would later join the band, as would soon-to-be-Eagle Bernie Leadon.

Also in 1969, late in the year, 23-year-old Gram hooked up with 16-year-old Gretchen Burrell. His new love interest was the daughter of high-profile news anchor Larry Burrell, who was very well-connected in Hollywood. Before long, Gretchen had moved into Parsons' place at the notorious Chateau Marmont Hotel, with her parents' blessings – because most wealthy parents, I would think, want their teenage daughter living in a debauched rock star's drug den. Another guest at the hotel at that same time, incidentally, was Rod Stewart (*at whose home, readers of Programmed to Kill will recall, one of the victims of the so-called Sunset Strip Killers would later be last seen*).

Miss Mercy
one of the Zappa GTOs
at Altamont

At the tail end of 1969, Parsons and his fellow Burrito Brothers had the dubious distinction of playing as one of the opening acts at the Rolling Stones' infamous free show at Altamont. Gram had become a very close confidant of the Stones, particularly Keith Richards, and he would later be credited with being the inspiration for the country flavor evident on the Stones' Let it Bleed album.

Parsons had first met up with the Stones when they were in Los Angeles in the summer of 1968 to mix their Beggar's Banquet album. Also hooking up with the Stones around that same time was Phil Kaufman, a recently-released prison buddy of Charlie Manson. Kaufman initially lived with the Manson Family after being released in March of 1968, and he thereafter remained what Kaufman himself described as a "*sympathetic cousin*" to Charlie. He also went to work as the Rolling Stones' road manager for their 1968 American tour, which is the type of job apparently best filled by ex-convict friends of Charles Manson.

In late summer of 1969, following the probable murder of Brian Jones in July, the Stones were back in LA to complete their Let It Bleed album and prepare for yet another tour. According to Ben Fong-Torres, writing in Hickory Wind, "*Mick and Keith stayed at Stephen Stills' house near Laurel Canyon … Before Stills, the house had been occupied by Peter Tork of the Monkees.*" (*For the record, other reports hold that the Peter Tork house was in, not near, Laurel Canyon*).

On December 6, 1969, temporary Laurel Canyon residents Mick and Keith, along with permanent Laurel Canyon residents Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and the Flying Burrito Brothers, all gathered at a desolate speedway known as Altamont to stage a free concert. By the time it was over, four people were dead and another 850 concert-goers were injured to varying degrees, mostly by members of the Hell's Angels swinging leaded pool cues.

The Angels had, of course, been hired by the Stones to ostensibly provide security. That decision is almost universally cast as an innocent mistake on the part of the band, though such a claim is difficult to believe. It was certainly no secret that the reactionary motorcycle clubs, formed by former military men, were openly hostile to hippies and anti-war activists; as early as 1965, they had brutally attacked peaceful anti-war demonstrators while police, who had courteously allowed the Angels to pass through their line, looked on.

It was also known that the Angels were heavily involved in trafficking meth, a drug that was widely blamed for the ugliness that had descended over the Haight.

Perhaps less well known was that more than a few of those biker gangs had uncomfortably close ties to Charlie Manson, particularly a club known as the Straight Satans, one of whose members, Danny DeCarlo, watched over the Family's arsenal of weapons. At least one of the per-

formers taking the stage at Altamont, curiously enough, also had close ties to the motorcycle clubs; as was revealed in his autobiography, Crosby "*had friends in every Bay Area chapter of the Hells Angels*."

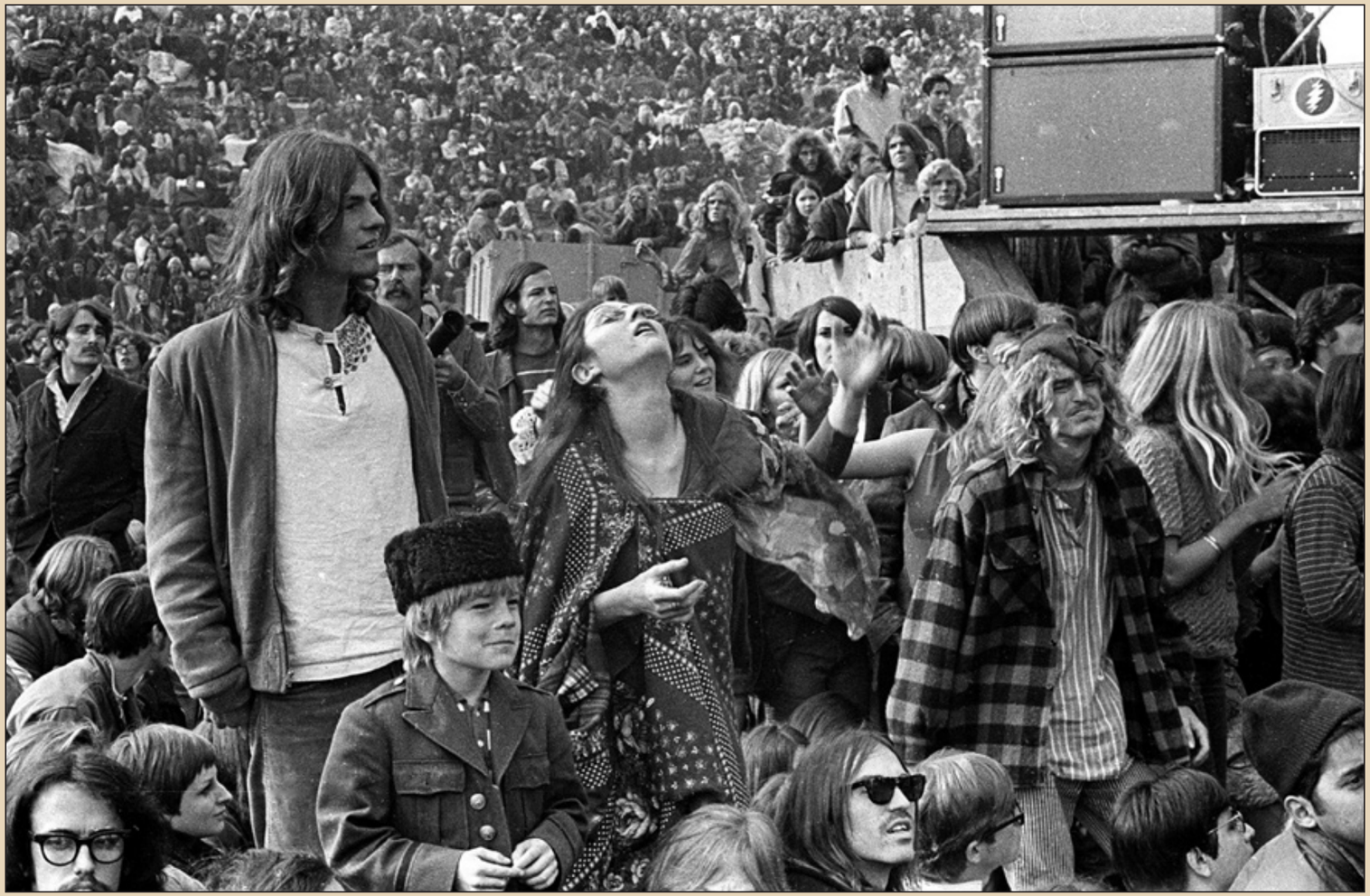
The death that the concert at Altamont will always be remembered for, of course, is that of Meredith Hunter, the young man who was stabbed to death by members of the Hell's Angels right in front of the stage while the band (*in this case, the Rolling Stones*) played on. The song they were playing, contrary to most accounts of the incident, was Sympathy for the Devil, as was initially reported in Rolling Stone magazine based on the accounts of several reporters on the scene and a review of the unedited film stock.

Most accounts claim that Hunter was killed while the band performed Under My Thumb. All such claims are based on the mainstream snuff film Gimme Shelter, in which the killing was deliberately presented out of sequence. In the absence of any alternative filmic versions of Hunter's death, the Maysles brothers' film became the default official orthodoxy. Of course, someone went to great lengths to insure that there would be only one available version of events; as Rolling Stone also reported, shortly after the concert, "*One weird Altamont story has to do with a young Berkeley filmmaker who claims to have gotten 8MM footage of the killing. He got home from the affair Saturday and began telling his friends about his amazing film. His house was knocked over the next night, completely rifled. The thief took only his film, nothing else*."

Contrary to the impression created by Gimme Shelter, Hunter was killed not long into the Stones' set. But as the film's editor, Charlotte Zwerin, explained to Salon some thirty years later, the climax of the movie always has to come at the end: "*We're talking about the structure of a film. And what kind of concert film are you going to be able to have after somebody has been murdered in front of the stage? Hanging around for another hour would have been really wrong in terms of the film.*" What wasn't wrong, apparently, was deliberately altering the sequence of events in what was ostensibly a documentary film.

Angels surge toward Hunter, who makes no attempt to defend himself with his imaginary gun

One of the young cameramen working for the Maysles brothers that day, curiously enough, was a guy by the name of George Lucas (*it is unclear whether it was Lucas who captured the conveniently unobstructed footage of the murder*). Not long after, Lucas began a meteoric rise to the very top of the Hollywood food chain. Also present that day, and featured in the film gyrating atop a raised platform near the stage, was the King of the Freaks himself, Vito Paulekas.



Altamont

Many of the accounts of the tragedy at Altamont include the demonstrably false claim that Hunter can unmistakably be seen drawing a gun just before being jumped and killed by the Angels (*some accounts even have Hunter firing the alleged gun*). What can certainly be fairly clearly seen is the large knife being brought down into Hunter's back. But a gun being brandished by Mr. Hunter? If you can see one, then you either have far better eyes than I, or a far more active imagination. Or both.

The Angel who was charged with the murder and then ultimately acquitted, Alan David Passaro, was found floating facedown in a reservoir in March of 1985 with $10,000 in his pocket. Despite a widespread belief to the contrary, Passaro's acquittal was not based on the jury having been convinced that Hunter had drawn a gun, but rather on the fact that the knife wounds that killed Hunter were apparently upstrokes, which meant that they were not the wounds inflicted on-camera by Passaro. He and/or someone else continued to stab Hunter after he was down, and it was those wounds, which the cameras didn't clearly record, that killed him.

About one year after Altamont, otherwise obscure singer/songwriter Don McLean penned the lyrics to what was destined to become one of the most iconic songs in the annals of popular music: American Pie. Those lyrics are essentially a chronological recitation of various tragedies that shaped the world of popular music. Not long after a reference to the August 1969 Manson murders and their connection to the Laurel Canyon music scene (Helter Skelter in a summer swelter, The birds flew off with a fallout shelter, Eight miles high and falling fast), and just before a reference to the October 1970 death of Janis Joplin (I met a girl who sang the blues, And I asked her for some happy news, but she just smiled and turned away, I went down to the sacred store, Where I'd heard the music years before, but the man there said the music wouldn't play), can be found a verse, reproduced at the top of this post, in which McLean characterizes the death of Hunter as a ritualized murder.

I, of course, would never make such a wild and reckless claim.

As was the custom with big events in the mid to late-1960s, particularly in the northern California area, Altamont was drenched in acid. And as was also the custom at that time, that acid was provided free-of-charge

by Mr. Augustus Owsley Stanley III, also known as The Bear. At the so-called "Human Be-In" staged in January of 1967, for example, Owsley had kindly distributed 10,000 tabs of potent LSD. For the Monterey Pop Festival just five months later, he had cooked up and distributed 14,000 tabs. For Altamont, he did likewise.

The 1960s were, you see – and you can look this up if you don't believe me – the era of brotherly love. So if someone happened to have, say, a cache of acid with a street value of $20,000-$30,000 (a considerable amount of money in the 1960s), he was naturally expected to hand it out for free to thousands of random strangers. Of course, probably the only person who routinely had such vast stockpiles of LSD was the premier acid chemist of the hippie era, Augustus Owsley Stanley.

No one – not Ken Kesey, not Richard "Babawhateverthefuckhecalledhimself" Alpert, not even Timothy Leary – did more to 'turn on' the youth of the 1960s than Owsley. Leary and his cohorts may have captured the national media spotlight and created public awareness, but it was Owsley who flooded the streets of San Francisco and elsewhere with consistently high quality, inexpensive, readily available acid. By most accounts, he was never in it for the money and he routinely gave away more of his product than he sold. What then was his motive? According to Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain, writing in Acid Dreams, "Owsley cultivated an image as a wizard-alchemist whose intentions with LSD were priestly and magical."

Altamont

To be sure, Owsley is revered by many as something of an icon of the 1960s counterculture – a man motivated by nothing more than an altruistic desire to 'turn on' the world. But then again, the trio listed in the preceding paragraph are revered by many as well, so you'll excuse me if I'm a bit hesitant to embrace Owsley as some sort of anti-hero – especially given his rather provocative background and family history.

Augustus Owsley Stanley III is the son, naturally enough, of Augustus Owsley Stanley II, who served as a military officer during World War II aboard the USS Lexington and thereafter found work in Washington, D.C. as a government attorney. He raised his son primarily in – where else? – Arlington, Virginia. Young Owsley's grandfather was Augustus Owsley Stanley, who served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1903 through 1915, as the Governor of Kentucky from 1915 through 1919, and as a U.S. Senator from 1919 through 1925. Senator Stanley's father, a minister with the Disciples of Christ, served as a judge advocate with the Confederate Army. His mother was a niece of William Owsley, who also served as a Governor of Kentucky, from 1844 through 1848, and who lent his name to Owsley County, Kentucky.
During Owsley III's formative years, he attended the prestigious Charlotte Hall Military Academy in Maryland, but was reportedly tossed out in the ninth grade for being intoxicated. Not long after that, at the tender age of fifteen, Owsley voluntarily committed himself to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C.. St. Elizabeth's, it should be noted, had a far more sinister name upon its founding in 1855: the Government Hospital for the Insane. He remained confined there for, uhmm, 'treatment' for the next fifteen months. During that time, his mother, in keeping with one of the recurrent themes of this saga, passed away.

Owsley apparently resumed his education following his curious confinement, but he had reportedly dropped out of school by the age of eighteen. Nevertheless, he apparently had no trouble at all gaining acceptance to the University of Virginia, which he attended for a time before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in 1956, at the age of twenty-one. During his military service, Owsley was an electronics specialist, working in radio intelligence and radar.

After his stint in the Air Force, Owsley set up camp in the Los Angeles area, ostensibly to study ballet. During that same time, he also worked at Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which was undoubtedly the primary reason for his move to LA. In 1963, Owsley moved once again, this time to Berkeley, California, which just happened to be ground-zero of the budding anti-war movement. He may or may not have briefly attended UC Berkeley, which is where he allegedly cribbed the recipe for LSD from the university library.

Owsley soon began cooking up both Methedrine and LSD in a makeshift bathroom lab near the campus of the university. On February 21, 1965, that lab was raided by state narcotics agents who seized all his lab equipment and charged Stanley with operating a meth lab. As Barry Miles recounted in Hippie, "Berkeley was awash with speed and Owsley was responsible for much of it." Nevertheless, Owsley walked away from the raid unscathed, and, with the help of his attorney, who happened to be the vice-mayor of Berkeley, he even successfully sued to have all his lab equipment returned. He quickly put that equipment to work producing some 4,000,000 tabs of nearly pure LSD in the mid-1960s.

Also in February of 1965, Owsley and his frequent sidekicks, the Grateful Dead, moved down to the Watts area of Los Angeles, of all places, to ostensibly conduct 'acid tests.' The group rented a house that was conveniently located right next door to a brothel, curiously paralleling the modus operandi of various intelligence operatives who were (or had been) involved in conducting their own 'acid tests.' The band departed the communal dwelling in April 1965, just a few months before Watts exploded in violence that left thirty-four corpses littering the streets.

Owsley had been with the Dead from the band's earliest days, as both a financial backer and as their sound engineer.

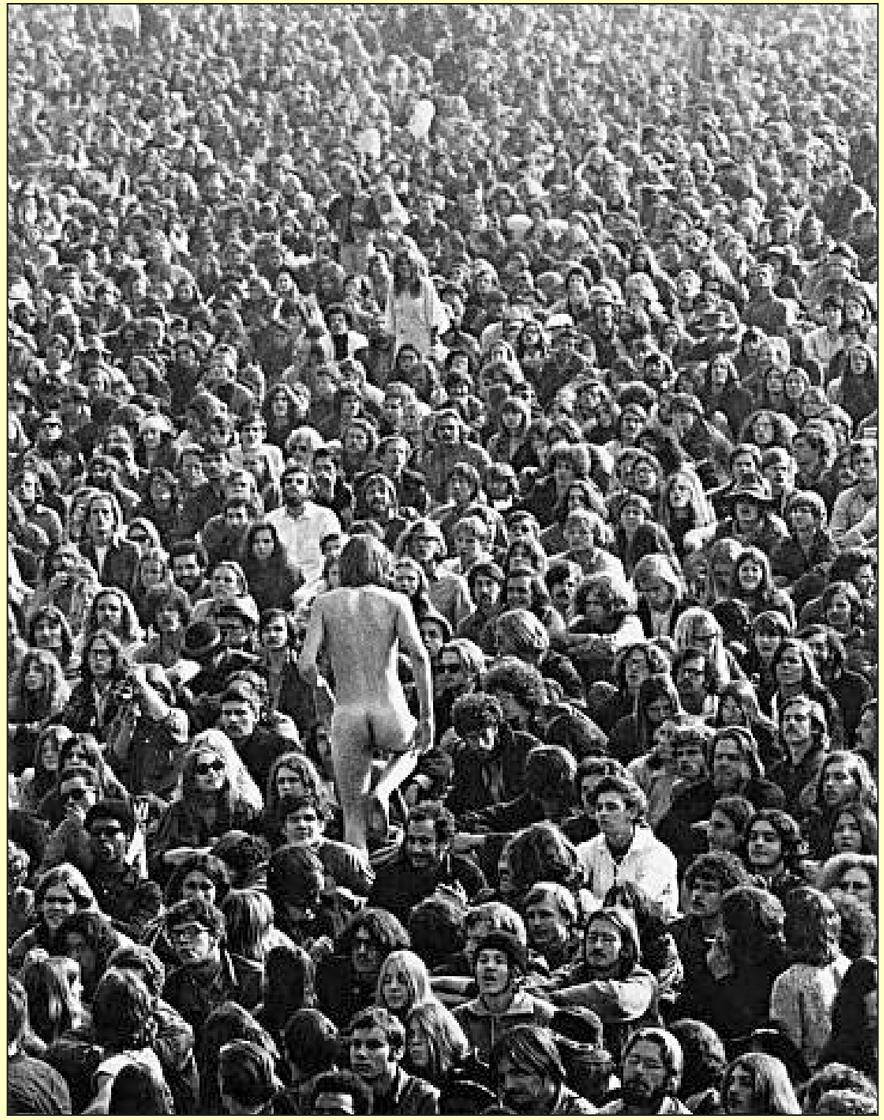
He is credited with numerous electronic innovations that changed the way that live rock music was presented to the masses – and likely not in a good way, given that his work as a sound technician undoubtedly drew heavily upon his military training.

In 1967, Owsley unleashed on the Haight a particularly nasty hallucinogen known as STP. Developed by the friendly folks at Dow Chemical, STP had been tested extensively at the Edgewood Arsenal as a possible biowarfare agent before being distributed to hippies as a recreational drug. Owsley reportedly obtained the recipe from Alexander Shulgin, a former Harvard man who developed a keen interest in psychopharmacology while serving in the U.S. Navy. Shulgin worked for many years as a senior research chemist at Dow, and later worked very closely with the DEA.

In 1970, Owsley began serving time after a conviction on drug charges. That time was served, appropriately enough, at Terminal Island Federal Correctional Institution, the very same prison that had, just a few years earlier, housed both Charlie Manson and Phil Kaufman. A few years later, it would also be home to both Timothy Leary and his alleged (but not actual) nemesis, G. Gordon Liddy. After his release, Owsley continued to work as a sound technician, eventually graduating to a new medium: television.

After that rather lengthy digression, we return now to our regularly scheduled program: the Gram Parsons saga. Along with Mick and the boys, Gram made a hasty exit from the chaos at Altamont via the Stones' private helicopter. The next year, his Flying Burrito Brothers released their second album, Burrito Deluxe, which was produced by Jim Dickson, the man who played such a pivotal role in shaping Laurel Canyon's first band, the Byrds. By June, Parsons had been booted out of the band, reportedly due to chronic alcohol and drug abuse. He quickly signed with A&M Records and was partnered with our old friend Terry Melcher.

Gram became a regular visitor to Melcher's Benedict Canyon home, where the self-destructive pair worked on songs together, with Gram on guitar and Melcher on piano. John Phillips became a close associate of Parsons at this time as well. Meanwhile, sister Avis had been institutionalized back in New Orleans. She had gotten pregnant, after which Bob Parsons had moved quickly to have her committed and to have her marriage annulled. Little Avis reached out repeatedly to big brother Gram for help, but got none.



Altamont

In late October of 1970, Gram went to A&M and signed out the master tapes of ten songs that he had recorded with Melcher; those tapes were never seen or heard again, as seems to happen from time-to-time with recordings made with Melcher. During roughly that same period of time, Parsons was busted with a briefcase full of prescription drugs. As would be expected, however, the charges were quietly dropped and Gram walked away unscathed.

There are many who claim, by the way, that the musicians under examination in this series were relentlessly persecuted by agents of the state, ostensibly to silence their voices of protest. But if that is true, then why is it that on more than one occasion when the state seems to have had solid evidence of crimes that could bring prison time, no action was taken? Our old friend David Crosby, for example, has candidly acknowledged that "the DEA could have popped me for interstate transport of dope or dealing lots of times and never did …" And John Phillips, busted for wholesale trafficking of pharmaceuticals, was, by his own account, "looking at forty-five years and got thirty days." He began serving his sentence on April 20, appropriately enough, and served just twenty-four days – in a minimum security prison that offered "residents" such activities as "basketball, aerobics, softball, tennis, archery, and golf," and that featured a "delicious kosher kitchen, an elaborate salad bar, and a tasty brunch on Sundays."

Sorry, but we seem to have drifted off course once again. I'll try to stay focused on the Gram Parsons story for the rest of this post.

In 1971, Gram married Gretchen Burrell. The lavish affair was held, curiously enough, at the New Orleans home of step-dad Bob Parsons, a fact that has left Gram's chroniclers somewhat puzzled. Bob Parsons was, after all, the man who had – at least in the eyes of many family members – terrorized and institutionalized Gram's younger sister, carried on a scandalous affair with the family's babysitter, murdered Gram's mother and subsequently married that babysitter, and repeatedly looted the family coffers. And yet it was Bob Parsons, of all people, whom Gram trusted to host his wedding, suggesting a bond between the two that would seem to defy conventional explanations.

That same year, Gram spent some time in France, hanging out once again with the Rolling Stones. The following year, he was signed to Reprise Records by Mo Ostin and he and Gretchen moved back into the Chateau Marmont, where Gram and Emmylou Harris began working on the songs that would make up his first solo album. Emmylou, as Fong-Torres notes, had been raised on "various military bases around Virginia," so she quickly fit right in with the Laurel Canyon crowd.

In 1973, with his first solo album, entitled simply GP, due for release, "Gram and Gretchen finally moved out of the Chateau Marmont and found a cozy brown wood-shingled house on Laurel Canyon Boulevard, which wound its way north from Hollywood through the stars' favorite canyon." Working once again with Emmylou, Gram began working on tracks for what would be his posthumously-released second solo album, Grievous Angel.

As July of 1973 rolled around, a series of tragedies befell Parsons and the people around him. In July of the previous year, Gram's friend Brandon DeWilde – who had introduced Gram to Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, Bruce Dern and Jack Nicholson, resulting in Gram's involvement in The Trip – had been killed in a traffic accident. A year later, on July 15, 1973, Gram's friend and fellow musician, Clarence White, was hit by a car and killed. According to Fong-Torres, "Around the same time that Clarence White was killed, Sid Kaiser, a familiar face in the Los Angeles rock scene, a close friend of Gram's and, not so incidentally, a source of high-quality drugs, died of a heart attack." Just after those two deaths, "In late July 1973 … [Gram's] house in Laurel Canyon burned down."

Other sources, for the record, have placed that house in Topanga Canyon rather than Laurel Canyon. Whatever the case, Gram was home when the house caught fire and was briefly hospitalized for smoke inhalation. Having lost their home and all their possessions, Gram and Gretchen "moved into Gretchen's father's spacious home on

Mulholland Drive in Laurel Canyon." Because the Burrells, naturally enough, also lived in everyone's favorite canyon.

Gram wouldn't live in the Burrell estate long though; on September 19, 1973, Ingram Cecil Connor III died in a nondescript room at the Joshua Tree Inn. His death is usually attributed to a drug overdose, but toxicology reports suggest otherwise. Parsons' death received minimal press coverage, partly because, as fate would have it, singer/songwriter Jim Croce went down in a blaze of glory the very next day, on September 20, 1973. But though the media had moved on, the Gram Parsons story wasn't quite over yet.

Parsons had been a regular visitor to Joshua Tree National Park, where one of his favorite pastimes was said to be ingesting hallucinogenic drugs and then searching for UFOs. Sometimes he would take friends, such as Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, along with him to help with the search. I'm no expert, to be sure, but it seems to me that if your goal is to succeed in spotting UFOs, then the dropping-acid strategy is probably a pretty good approach. But again, that's not really my area of expertise.

In September of 1973, Gram was accompanied to Joshua Tree by his personal assistant, Michael Martin, Martin's girlfriend, Dale McElroy, and Parson's former high school sweetheart, Margaret Fisher. As the story goes, the group soon ran out of pot and quickly dispatched Martin back to LA to pick up a fresh supply. He was, therefore, officially not there at the time of Gram's death, though why he hadn't returned has never been explained, especially given that his job was, specifically, to keep an eye on Gram and monitor his drug intake.

How Gram Parsons died is anyone's guess. There are as many versions of the event as there were witnesses to it. Actually, that's not quite true – there are more versions than there were witnesses, because some of those witnesses have told more than one story. Officially, Parsons died of an overdose, but forensic testing revealed no morphine or barbiturates in his blood. Morphine showed up in his liver and urine, but as experts have noted, those toxicology results indicate chronic, but not recent, use.

Police seem to have had little interest in getting at the truth and made no apparent effort to reconcile the various conflicting accounts. Details of the incident – such as how long Gram had been left alone, whether he was still alive when discovered, who made that discovery, etc. – were wildly inconsistent in the accounts of Fisher, McElroy, and Frank and Alan Barbary (the Inn's owner and his son, who were also witnesses, and whose accounts conflicted both with each other and with the girls' accounts).

At the hospital, police spoke briefly with the two girls and then released them. Within two hours, Phil Kaufman was on the scene to pick up Fisher and McElroy. Bypassing the police and the hospital, Kaufman went directly to the Inn, which the girls had returned to, and quickly hustled them straight back to LA. Police never spoke to either of the women again, despite the conflicting accounts and the open question of what exactly it was that killed Gram.

On the autumnal equinox of 1973, Kaufman and Martin, driving a dilapidated hearse provided by McElroy, arrived at LAX to claim the body of Gram Parsons. Apparently no one, including the police officer who was nearby, found it at all unusual that two drunken, disheveled men in an obviously out-of-service hearse (it had no license plates and several broken windows) had arrived without any paperwork to claim the body of a deceased celebrity. In fact, according to Kaufman's dubious account, the cop even helped the pair load the casket into the hearse – and then looked the other way when Martin slammed the hearse into a wall on the way out of the hangar.

Kaufman and Martin then drove the body back out to Joshua Tree, doused it with gasoline and set it ablaze. Local police initially speculated that the cremation was "ritualistic," which indeed it was, but such reports were, and continue to be, scoffed at.

On September 26, LAPD detectives, led by anchorman Larry Burrell, came knocking on Kaufman's door with warrants to serve. Bizarrely enough, director Arthur Penn was there with a full crew shooting scenes for the film Night Moves with star Gene Hackman (because when you're a friend of Charlie Manson's, it would appear, everyone in Hollywood wants to hang out with you). While the crew continued working, Kaufman was taken in, but he was back just a few hours later. In the end, he and Martin were fined $300 each plus reimbursement for the cost of the coffin.

In January 1974, four months after his death, Grievous Angel was released to critical acclaim and public indifference. Later that year, Gram's adoptive father, Bob Parsons, died as well, reportedly of alcohol-related illness. He had apparently been making moves aimed at gaining control of the deceased musician's estate. In keeping with family tradition, Bob failed to make it to the age of fifty (Gram's real dad, Coon Dog, had died at forty-one, his mother at forty-two, and Gram at just twenty-six).

By sheer coincidence, no doubt, the deaths of Gram and Bob Parsons were followed by the bankruptcy of much of the Snively family business, which also occurred in 1974. Around that same time, Little Avis gave birth to daughter Flora. Sixteen years later, both were killed in a boating accident in Virginia. Avis had made it all the way to age forty.

Owsley "*Bear*" Stanley (right), born Augustus Owsley Stanley III (*January 19, 1935 – March 13, 2011*) LSD manufacturer, probably the first private individual to manufacture LSD. Between 1965 and 1967 he produced more than 1.25 million doses of LSD — a catalyst for the emergence of the hippie movement during the Summer of Love in the Haight-Ashbury area, which one historian of that movement, Charles Perry, has described as "*one big LSD party.*" Stanley was also an accomplished sound engineer, and the longtime sound man and financier for the Grateful Dead. Stanley died in an automobile accident in Australia on March 13, 2011.

L to R: Matt the Cat, Jeff Kinzbach, Denny Sanders, Murray Saul, John Gorman, Roger McGuinn, Annette Salvatore (programming asst.), Charlie Kendall

The Byrds were the very first folk-rock band to take flight, and the one that achieved the greatest fame, but to many discerning ears, Laurel Canyon's other folk-rock powerhouse, the Buffalo Springfield, was the more talented band.

In the literature chronicling the 1960s music scene, few stories are repeated more frequently than the legend surrounding the formation of what would later be regarded as perhaps the first '*supergroup*.' All such accounts unquestioningly retell the story as though it were the gospel truth, seemingly oblivious to the improbability of virtually every aspect of the legend. And curiously, virtually every version of the story contains some form of the word "*serendipity*," as though everyone has been copying off the same kid's homework.

As the story goes, Stephen Stills and Richie Furay, formerly of the Au Go-Go Singers, had recently transplanted themselves to Los Angeles after the breakup of the manufactured folkie group. Stills had been the first to relocate, in August of 1965. Furay flew out to join him in February 1966, after spending a little time working at defense giant Pratt & Whitney, and the two set their sights on putting together a folk-rock band.

Meanwhile, up in Toronto, Neil Young and Bruce Palmer were playing in a band known as the Mynah Birds – a band fronted by an AWOL Navy man known as Ricky James Matthews, who would later morph into funkmeister/torturer/rapist Rick James, but whose real name was James Ambrose Johnson, Jr. The Mynah Birds broke up in March of 1965, just after authorities came calling on Matthews and tossed him in the Brooklyn Brig. Now in search of a new band, Young made the curious decision to head out to LA, for no better reason than that he had what Palmer described as "*a hunch, a feeling that … Stephen Stills was in LA.*"

Of course, Young had no clue if Stills was in fact there, nor did he know anyone else in LA. And you would think that he would have realized that, even if Stills was there, there was virtually no chance of finding some random person in a city of millions, especially when the person doing the searching had no idea how to get around the city. But no matter. Neil had a calling, so he jumped into an old hearse, of all things, recruited Palmer to ride shotgun, and the two set off on the lengthy trek to Los Angeles.

They arrived, the legend tells us, on April 1, 1966 – April Fool's Day, appropriately enough – and began the search for Stills. Several days of searching yielded no results, however, and on the afternoon of April 6, the frustrated pair decided to head off to San Francisco in the hopes that maybe they would have better luck finding Stephen there. Perhaps they were going to go on a tour of all the big cities in America, in the hopes that somewhere along the way they might find Stephen Stills. But as fate would have it, just as they were about to head out of town, Stephen Stills found them. As Barney Hoskyns tells the story in his Hotel California:

"*Early in April 1966, Stills and Richie Furay were stuck in a Sunset Strip traffic jam in Barry Friedman's Bentley. As they sat in the car, Stephen spotted a 1953 Pontiac hearse with Ontario plates on the other side of the street. 'I'll be damned if that ain't Neil Young,' Stills said. Friedman executed an illegal U-turn and pulled up behind the hearse. One of rock's great serendipities had just occurred. Young, a lanky Canadian, had just driven all the way from Detroit in the company of bassist Bruce Palmer. They'd caught the bug that was drawing hundreds of other pop wannabes to the West Coast.*"

The pair had actually driven out from Toronto, not Detroit, and the hearse was a 1959 model by most accounts, and Stills and Furay were in a van rather than a Bentley, but such inconsistencies are typical of all Hollywood legends. In any event, John Einarson, in For What It's Worth, supplies a somewhat longer, and more hyperbole-filled, version of the legend:

"*What transpired next is no longer considered simply a chance encounter. Transcending mere fact, the events of the next few minutes have taken on mythic proportions to become, in the annals of popular culture, legendary. More than pure luck, coincidence or serendipity, at that very moment the planets aligned, stars crossed, everyone's karma turned positive, divine intervention interceded, the hand of fate revealed itself – whatever you subscribe to in order to explain the unexplained. Though each of the five participants in that moment in time tell it slightly differently, the fact remains that the occupants of the white van, individually or collectively, depending on who's retelling it, noticed the black hearse with the foreign plate heading the other direction. Once the light of recognition came on, the van hastily pulled an illegal, and likely difficult in rush hour, U-turn, maneuvering its way through the line of northbound cars, horn honking frantically all the while, to pull up behind the hearse. One of the passengers leapt out, ran up and pounded on the driver's side window of the strange vehicle, yelling to the startled travelers inside who had taken no notice of the blaring car horn directly behind them. 'Hey Neil, it's me, Steve Stills! Pull over, man!' The drivers of the two vehicles managed to find curb space or a vacant store parking lot, again depending on whose version is being related, and the five piled out to embrace and introduce one another … On April 6, 1966, in that late afternoon line of traffic, the course of popular music was altered forever.*"

Anyone who actually lives and drives in LA likely knows that "*difficult*" is not really the word to describe the feasibility of making an impromptu U-turn in rush hour traffic on the Sunset Strip; the correct word would be "*impossible*," which is the same word that accurately describes the likelihood of that van "*maneuvering its way through the line of northbound cars*," or of it finding "*curb space*" on Sunset Boulevard. But let's just play along and assume that Neil Young and Stephen Stills, each of whom, for some reason, had been dreaming about forming a band with the other, had a random, chance encounter on Sunset Boulevard. In that brief moment in time, a band was formed – or at least 4/5 of a band.

all in a days work

Retiring to the home of Barry Friedman, who would later legally change his name to Frazier Mohawk, the quartet of musicians quickly decided that their newly-formed band would only perform original material. With no less than three singer/songwriter/guitarists on board (*Furay, Young and Stills*), along with a bass player (*Bruce Palmer*), all that was needed was a drummer. Three days later, on April 9, 1966, they acquired one, in the form of Dewey Martin, formerly with the Dillards. The Dillards, as it turns out, had just decided to go back to their acoustic bluegrass roots, so they no longer needed a drummer. They also apparently had no further need for a whole bunch of new electric instruments and stacks of amplifiers, so Dewey, according to legend, brought all of that with him. Because the Dillards, you know, were just going to throw it all away anyway. So now, with the stars all properly aligned, the band was not only complete but they each had shiny new electric instruments to play – and it all had magically come together in just 72 hours.

There was still much work to be done, of course. For one thing, they all had to learn to play those shiny new electric instruments. And they all had to learn to play together as a band. And they had to build up a repertoire of original songs. And they had to rehearse and polish those songs. But not to worry; they had, as we'll see, at least a couple of hours to work on each of those things.

Unlike, say, the Byrds, the members of the Buffalo Springfield were, by all accounts, talented musicians from the outset. Stills and Young were both skilled lead guitarists and songwriters, though Young's vocals were, to be sure, an acquired taste. Furay was an accomplished rhythm guitarist and songwriter, as well as being the group's best lead vocalist. Bruce Palmer was a respected bass player who, shockingly, actually had experience playing the instrument. And Dewey Martin, several years older than the rest of the crew, had drummed for such rock and country legends as the Everly Brothers, Charlie Rich, Roy Orbison, Patsy Cline, and Carl Perkins.

None of that, however, explains the absurdly meteoric rise of the Buffalo Springfield. On April 11, 1966, just five

From left to right: Richie Furay's wife, Richie Furay (Buffalo Springfield vocals/guitars), Dewey Martin (B.S. drummer), Dewey Martin's first wife, Lind, Neil Young, Stephen Stills, Dickie Davies (B.S. manager), at a Los Angeles club.

days after the quartet had purportedly first met, and just two days after they had added a drummer and instruments, the band played its first club date at one of Hollywood's most prestigious venues: the Troubadour. Four days later, on April 15, they played the first of six dates around the southland opening for the hottest band on the Strip: the Byrds. That mini-tour was followed almost immediately by a six-week stand at the hottest club on the Strip, the Whisky. That gig wrapped up on June 20, 1966.

A month later, on July 25, the band landed the opening slot on the most anticipated concert of the year – the Rolling Stones show at the Hollywood Bowl, sponsored by local radio station KHJ. The station, by the way, had just been launched the previous year, in May of 1965, just a few weeks after the Byrds had taken the world by storm with the release of Mr. Tambourine Man and sparked a folk-rock revolution. Just as new clubs had magically appeared along the Sunset Strip in anticipation of the about-to-explode music scene, so too did a radio station magically appear to promote those new clubs and the artists filling them. Such things tend to happen, as we know, rather, uhmm, serendipitously.

stop children what's that sound?

Three days after the Stones concert at the Bowl, Buffalo Springfield released its first single, the Neil Young-penned "*Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing*", which failed to connect with the record-buying public. Several months later, the band would release what was to be its only hit single, and what would become the most recognizable '*protest*' song of the 1960s. But before we get to that, let's start back at the beginning … actually, let's veer off on a tangent first, and then start back at the beginning.

Burning draft cards - 1969

As was duly noted in the previously, the law enforcement community had ample opportunity to silence the muses of the 1960s counterculture. That the state consistently chose not to utilize that power says much about the legitimacy of that counterculture. For if these iconic figures posed a demonstrable threat to the status quo, then why would they not have been silenced? Why, for example, were three members of the Buffalo Springfield – Neil Young, Richie Furay and Jim Messina, along with Eric Clapton, Furay's wife, the band's road manager, and nine others – arrested in a drug bust at a Topanga Canyon home, only to then walk away as if nothing had happened? Why was this case, and so many others like it, not aggressively prosecuted?

The state had other means to silence young critics, of course, one of the best being the military draft. As Richie Unterberger noted in Turn! Turn! Turn!, "*Most folk rockers (if they were male), like their audience, were of draft age.*" But curiously enough, "*Very, very few had their careers interrupted by the draft.*" Actually, Unterberger appears to just be playing it safe with the "*very, very few*" wording; after reading through both of Unterberger's books and numerous other tomes covering similar ground, I have yet to read about any folk rocker whose career was affected by the draft in the 1960s.

What you will find in the literature are numerous mentions of various people receiving their draft notices, but those are invariably followed by amusing anecdotes about how said people beat the draft board by pretending to be gay or crazy. Of course, if it were really that easy to fool the draft board, then Uncle Sam probably wouldn't have been able to come up with all those bodies to send over to Vietnam.

the woodstock generation stayed home

Hundreds of thousands of young men from all across the country were swept up and fed into the war machine, but not one of the musical icons of the Woodstock generation was among them. How could that be? Should we just consider that to be another one of those great serendipities? Was it mere luck that kept all the Laurel Canyon stars out of jail and out of the military during the turbulent decade that was the 1960s?

Not likely. The reality is that '*The Establishment*,' as it was known in those days, had the power to prevent the musical icons of the 1960s from ever becoming the megastars that they became. The state, aka corporate America, could quite easily have prevented the entire countercultural movement from ever really getting off the ground – because then, as now, the state controlled the channels of communication.

A real grass-roots cultural revolution would probably have involved a bunch of starving musicians barely scratching out a living playing tiny coffee shops in the hopes of maybe someday landing a record deal with some tiny, local independent label and then, just maybe, if they got really lucky, getting a little airplay on some obscure college radio stations. But that's not how the '60s folk-rock '*revolution*' played out. Not by any stretch of the imagination.

As Unterberger duly notes in his expansive, two-volume review of the folk-rock movement, "*much folk-rock was recorded and issued by huge corporations, and broadcast over radio and television stations owned for the most part by the same or similar pillars of the establishment.*" Right from the start, in fact, it was the largest record labels leading the folk-rock charge. The very first of the folk-rock bands, the Byrds, signed with Columbia Records – whose name, in case you were wondering, is derived from a little place known as the District of Columbia, where the label was founded and headquartered some 120 years ago.

Laurel Canyon's other folk-rock powerhouse, the Buffalo Springfield – the band that was supposed to be as big as the Byrds and the Beatles and the Beach Boys – signed with Atlantic Records. Atlantic had been founded in 1947 by Ahmet Ertegun and dentist/investor Herb Abramson. Born in Istanbul, Turkey in 1923, the year the Turk Republic was established, Ahmet was the son, and the grandson, of career diplomats/civil servants. His father was named the first Turkish representative to the League of Nations in 1925 and thereafter served as the Turk Republic's ambassador to Switzerland, France, and England. In 1935, he was named the first Turkish ambassador to the United States and he promptly relocated the family to – where else? – Washington, DC.

From about the age of twelve, Ahmet grew up along DC's Embassy Row, attending elite private schools with the sons and daughters of senators, congressmen, and spooks. In 1947, three years after his father died, Ertegun founded Atlantic Records. At first, the label was home to jazz and R&B artists, including Ray Charles, the company's first big star. In the late 1950s, Ertegun took on his first assistant: a guy by the name of Phil Spector, who, rumor has it, was recently convicted of blowing a hole in Lana Clarkson's head. Atlantic soon shifted focus and rock luminaries like Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones would later join the label's stable of talent.

deep ties

It would appear then that the two record labels that signed and launched Laurel Canyon's first two folk-rock bands were not only major record labels, they also just happened to be corporate entities that had deep ties to the nation's capitol and power center. It was the major record labels, not upstart independents, that signed Laurel Canyon's newly-formed bands. It was the major labels that provided them with instruments and amplifiers. It was the major labels that provided them with studio time and session musicians. It was the major labels that recorded, mixed and arranged their albums. It was the major labels that released and then heavily promoted those albums. And so as not to be left out, the corporate titans of all three branches of the mainstream media – print, radio and television – did their part to help out the titans of the record industry.

Unterberger notes that "*AM radio (and sometimes prime-time network television) would act as a primary conduit for this countercultural expression*." Conservative, corporate-controlled AM stations across the country almost immediately began giving serious airplay to the new sounds coming out of Southern California, and network television gave the rising stars unprecedented coverage and exposure:

"*prime-time variety hours were much more likely to showcase rock acts than they would be in subsequent decades. New releases by the Byrds were often accompanied by large ads in trade magazines that simultaneously plugged the records and upcoming TV appearances*."

move along, nothing to see here

The boys in the Buffalo Springfield, for example, managed to find themselves appearing as guests on an impressive array of network television shows, including American Bandstand, The Smothers Brothers Show, Shebang, the Della Reese Show, the Go Show, the Andy Williams Show, Hollywood Palace, Where the Action Is, Joey Bishop's late night show, and a local program known as Boss City. They also made guest appearances, curiously enough, on primetime hits like Mannix and The Girl From Uncle.

The print media did its part as well to raise awareness of the new music/countercultural scene. In September 1965, the nation's premier newsweeklies, Time and Newsweek, "*ran virtually simultaneous stories on the folk-rock craze,*" just months after the first folk-rock release, the Byrd's Mr. Tambourine Man, had climbed to the top of the charts. The country's biggest daily newspapers chimed in as well, providing an inordinate amount of coverage of the emerging scene. By the end of 1967, the movement had its very own publication, Rolling Stone magazine. Initially designed to look as though it were a product of the underground press, it was, without question, very much a corporate mouthpiece.

Another avenue of the print media provided the scene with considerable exposure as well; as Einarson notes, many of the Laurel Canyon stars, particularly members of the Buffalo Springfield and the Monkees, were "*the darlings of the California teen magazines,*" including Teenset, Teen Screen, and Tiger Beat.

As the story is usually told, the 1960s countercultural movement posed a rather serious threat to the status quo. But if that were truly the case, then why was it the "*pillars of the establishment*," to use Unterberger's words, that launched the movement to begin with? Why was it '*the man*' that signed and recorded these artists? And that heavily promoted them on the radio, on television, and in print? And that set them up with their very own radio station and their very own publication? And insured that new clubs sprung up like mushrooms along Sunset Boulevard so that all the new bands would have venues to play?

There are some readers, no doubt, who will say that this was simply a case of corporate America doing what it does so well: making a profit, off of anything and everything. Blinded by greed, the naysayers will claim, the corporate titans inadvertently created a monster. "*Move along now folks, there's nothing more to see here …*"

The question that is begged by that explanation, however, is why, after it had become abundantly clear that a monster had allegedly been created, was nothing done to stop the growth of that monster? Why did the state not utilize its law enforcement and criminal justice powers to silence some of the most prominent countercultural voices? And why did the draft board – in every known case, without exception – allow those same voices to skip out on their military service?

It's not as if the state would have had to resort to heavy-handed measures to silence these allegedly troublesome voices. Being that the vast majority of them were draft-age males who were openly using and/or advocating the

Dick Clark - 1965

use of illegal substances, they were practically begging for the powers-that-be to take action. And yet that never happened. And now, while you ponder all of that, I'll circle back around and tell the Buffalo Springfield story from the beginning, starting in 1945 when Stephen Arthur Stills was born to William and Talitha Stills. As John Einarson recounts in For What It's Worth, Stephen's "*roots are firmly planted in Southern soil. His family traces its history back to the plantations of the rural antebellum South. After the Union armies laid waste to much of the Southern farm economy, the family relocated to Illinois.*"

Einarson describes William Stills as "*somewhat of a soldier of fortune, an engineer, builder, and dreamer who frequently uprooted the family to follow his dreams and schemes*." That is, I suppose, as good a definition as any for what he actually appears to have been: a military intelligence operative who was frequently on assignment in Central America. Stephen's childhood was spent in Illinois, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and various parts of Central America, including Costa Rica, El Salvador and the Panama Canal Zone.

At a fairly young age, he attended the Admiral Farragut Military Academy in St. Petersburg, Florida. In later years, his authoritarian manner and military bearing would earn him the nickname "*The Sarge*." He joined his first band, the Radars, as a drummer. In his next band, the Continentals, he played the guitar, alongside another young guitarist named Don Felder, who would later turn up in Laurel Canyon as a member of the Eagles, but we'll get to that later.

According to Einarson, "*An unfortunate incident with the administration at his Tampa Bay high school resulted in Stephen's dismissal in 1961, after which he joined his wayward family then settled in Costa Rica*." What that "*unfortunate incident*" may have been has been left to the reader's imagination. In any event, Stephen's next few years are rather murky. Some reports have him graduating from a high school in the Panama Canal Zone. Others have him shuffling back and forth between Florida and Central America. Stills himself has at times claimed that he served a stint in Vietnam. Whatever the case, in March of 1964 he surfaced in New Orleans with his sights set on a career in music.

By the summer of 1964, he had drifted to New York's Greenwich Village, where he became fast friends with folkie Peter Torkelson, who was, like so many others in this story, a child of Washington, DC. The two played together briefly as a duo before Torkelson "*migrated to Connecticut then Venezuela*." Nothing unusual about that, I suppose. Torkelson would soon show up in Laurel Canyon, as Monkee Peter Tork. Stills would also audition for the show, but his bad teeth and thinning hair would render him unfit for a leading role on prime-time TV.

In July 1964, Stills found work as one of the nine members of the Au Go-Go Singers, the newly-formed house band for New York's famed Café Au Go-Go. Singing alongside of Stills was a young Richie Furay, the son of a pharmacist who had run a family drugstore in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Furay's father died when Richie was just thirteen, as tends to happen from time to time in this story.

By November 1964, the Au Go-Go Singers already had an album out. But trouble soon arose, due primarily to the fact that the band was under contract to Morris Levy, a known organized-crime figure who would soon be indicted on an array of criminal charges. The band soon broke up and Furay headed off to Connecticut where a cousin got him a job at Pratt & Whitney. While working there, he took a little time off to audition for a slot in the Chad Mitchell Trio, but he was beat out by a military brat from Roswell named John Deutschendorf, later to become John Denver.

Stephen Stills, meanwhile, hung out in New York for a while longer before heeding the call of the Pied Piper and heading out to LA in August of 1965. That was the summer, according to Einarson, that "*the epicenter of American rock'n'roll shifted coasts, Los Angeles replacing New York as the power base of the music industry*."

Richie Furay apparently soon found himself missing Stills but didn't know how to reach his former bandmate, so he sent a letter to Stills' dad in El Salvador, according to legend, and William Stills forwarded the message to Stephen. And what exactly, you may be wondering, was the elder Stills doing in El Salvador circa 1965/66? Details aren't readily available, but as William Blum has duly noted in Killing Hope, "*Throughout the 1960s, multifarious American experts occupied themselves in El Salvador by enlarging and refining the state's security and counter-insurgency apparatus: the police, the National Guard, the military, the communications and intelligence networks, the coordination with their counterparts in other Central American countries ... as matters turned out, these were the forces and resources which were brought into action to impose widespread repression and wage war*."

Meanwhile, up in Canada, Neil Young and Bruce Palmer were handling guitar and bass duties for the Mynah Birds. Neil Percival Kenneth Ragland Young was born on November 12, 1945 in Toronto to Scott Young, a sportswriter and novelist, and Edna "*Rassy*" Ragland, a Canadian television personality. Scott Young had spent a considerable amount of time abroad during World War II, first as a journalist and then as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy. Scott's father (Neil's grandfather), like Richie Furay's, had been a pharmacist/drug store owner.

As Einarson recounts, "*Neil Young and Stephen Stills had more in common than music. Both had grown up in transient families, Neil's journalist father Scott uprooting his mother Edna 'Rassy,' Neil, and older brother Bob several times during Neil's first 15 years.*" Novelists, I'm guessing, need to move around a lot.

Just after his seventeenth birthday, Neil formed his first band, the Squires, and began playing local gigs. It was during those early years, according to legend, that Young and Stills first briefly crossed paths up in Canada. That meeting would, a couple years later, allegedly send Young and Palmer – also born in Toronto, to a violinist father and artist mother – off on a cross-country quest to find Stephen Stills.

The Mynah Birds, by the way, also at one time featured Nick St. Nicholas and Goldie McJohn, both of whom defected to a rival local band known as the Sparrows. The Sparrows, after a lead singer replacement, would morph into Steppenwolf. And Steppenwolf, like the other band spawned by the Mynah Birds, would migrate to – guess where?

– Laurel Canyon.

At the time of the 'serendipitous' encounter on Sunset Boulevard, Stills was living at the home of Barry Friedman, a former circus clown, fire-eater, TV producer, and freelance publicist. To say that his home was a bit odd would probably be an understatement. According to folkie Nurit Wilde, "*It had a bathtub in the middle of the living room and a secret room behind the bathroom where people carried on liaisons*." The massive bathtub sat right in front of the equally massive fireplace. As Friedman himself would later acknowledge, "*This was a very strange house.*"

Not strange by canyon standards, perhaps, but strange nonetheless. Stranger homes can certainly be found, such as in the Holly Mont neighborhood near the base of nearby Beachwood Canyon. One such home is described in the book Haunted Hollywood. The house isn't actually haunted, of course, but it does contain some rather unusual features, as a past owner discovered:

"*the house's most startling feature – a secret passageway behind a built-in bookshelf he'd discovered during remodeling. It connected to a series of subterranean tunnels linking several houses on the hillside ... While exploring the tunnel beneath his house, Grey found a makeshift grave. The headstone read 'Regina 1922.'*"

Anyway … as I was saying, Friedman had taken both Stills and Furay under his wing, providing them with a place to live and rehearse, doling out spending money, and introducing them to music industry contacts. Friedman was there when the fabled meeting took place, and it was to his home that the group adjourned after stopping on the Strip. It was also Friedman who found them their drummer, Walter Milton Dwayne Midkiff, otherwise known as Dewey Martin.

Friedman, as it turns out, was working for Byrds' manager Jim Dickson, who also managed the Dillards. Dickson hooked Friedman up with Martin, and with a full slate of electric instruments, just as he had set the Byrds up with instruments and a bass player. Dickson and Friedman would soon become neighbors when Friedman moved from his odd house on Fountain Avenue to a home on Ridpath in – all together now! – Laurel Canyon.

That home, on 8524 Ridpath, would become a rather notorious party house. As Jackson Browne, who Friedman later took under his wing, recalled, "*It was always open house at Paul Rothchild's and Barry Friedman's*" (Paul Rothchild, for those who have forgotten, was the producer of the Doors, and in case I hadn't mentioned it before, an ex-convict). Barney Hoskyns writes in Hotel California that *"Friedman ... orchestrated scenes of sexual and narcotic depravity that soon spun out of control."* Among the regular visitors was *"a gaggle of girls who mainly lived at Monkee Peter Tork's house*" – which was also, as we all know, in Laurel Canyon.

Just a few doors down from Friedman, at 8504 Ridpath, lived Barry James, who also played a behind-the-scenes role in the success of the Byrds. Michael Ochs, brother of folk legend/self-professed CIA operative Phil Ochs, worked as James' assistant. A very young Jackson Browne, fresh from the "*imposing Browne family home in the tony, old-money neighborhood of Highland Park*," lived with James for a year, during which time Friedman worked to build a band around Browne. Toward that end, he recruited someone else who came from "*old-money*," a kid by the name of Ned Doheny.

Most members of the Springfield also took up residence in our favorite secluded canyon. Richie Furay initially moved in with Mark Volman of the Turtles, who already had a place on Lookout Mountain Avenue. After marrying in March of 1967, Furay got his own place right on Laurel Canyon Boulevard. Neil Young, ever the recluse, found himself in what has been described as a "*shack*" at 8451 Utica Drive. And Stills eventually moved into Peter Tork's home, also on Laurel Canyon Boulevard. It is unclear whether Palmer and Martin took up residence in the canyon. Martin was older than the rest of the band, having been born on September 30, 1940 in Ontario. In the very early 1960s, he served a brief stint in the U.S. Army, though he appears to have been, like Young and Palmer, a Canadian citizen. Go figure. Following that, as previously noted, he played with many country and rock legends before briefly joining up with the Dillards. With him added to the Springfield, the band was complete. It wouldn't stay that way for any length of time, however. Bruce Palmer had a habit of getting himself arrested on a regular basis, usually on drug charges. Some of those arrests led to deportations, since both he and Young were in the country illegally.

He never seems to have had much trouble getting back into the country, however, and needless to say, none of his crimes seem to have actually been prosecuted in any meaningful way. But he did go missing on a fairly regular basis. During the band's two-year run, Ken Koblun, Jim Fielder (*formerly of Zappa's Mothers of Invention*), and Jim Messina all filled in on bass for varying lengths of time. And Doug Hastings filled in for a sometimes absent Neil Young, who had a habit of occasionally quitting the band, primarily due to ego clashes with The Sarge.

The band's second single, recorded and mixed on December 5, 1966, and written just a couple weeks before, was released locally in December 1966 and nationally in early January 1967. It would be the group's only hit single and it is remembered today as the quintessential protest song of the 1960s. That song, of course, is "*For What It's Worth*", the opening lines of which kicked off this series.

As a protest song, it must be said, it doesn't quite measure up. First of all, despite what is commonly believed nowadays, ***the song is not a commentary on Vietnam War protests***. Far from it. The event under consideration was the so-called Riot on the Sunset Strip, which involved about 1,000 kids who were demonstrating against the imposition of a curfew and the announcement that a popular club – Pandora's Box, at 8118 Sunset Boulevard – was slated to be closed.

Pandora's was a small coffee shop that featured poetry readings, folk music … and Laurel Canyon bands like Love and Buffalo Springfield. This caused a bit of a problem though, as the club sat on a traffic island at the intersection of Sunset and Crescent Heights (*the gateway to Laurel Canyon*), and overflow crowds would spill out onto the boulevard, blocking traffic. Even before the problems began, the building was scheduled to be demolished as part of a planned road-widening project.

Nevertheless, the announcement of its closing sparked a demonstration, and on the night of November 12, 1966, 200 cops squared off against perhaps 1,000 kids. The LAPD, being the LAPD, began cracking heads and arresting everyone in sight. Protestors responded by throwing rocks, setting a car ablaze, and attempting to ignite a bus.

as a past owner discovered in the white house at right: "*the house's most startling feature – a secret passageway behind a built-in bookshelf he'd discovered during remodeling. It connected to a series of subterranean tunnels linking several houses on the hillside … While exploring the tunnel beneath his house, [he] found a makeshift grave. The headstone read 'Regina 1922.'*"

One month later, a song commemorating the event would be blaring from car radios across the city. Eight months after that, Pandora's would be bulldozed.

Even if the song had been about anti-war protests, it still would be an odd choice for a protest song. Lyrics such as "*Singing songs and carrying signs, mostly say hooray for our side*," seem to largely dismiss the concerns of protestors. And the line "*nobody's right if everybody's wrong*" seems to suggest that protestors are no better than that which they are protesting against.

Another curious irony about the song is that it was authored by Stephen Stills, aka "*The Sarge*", an authoritarian, law-and-order kind of guy if ever there was one. Stills himself later heaped derision on the very notion of a protest song: "*We didn't want to do another song like For What It's Worth. We didn't want to be a protest group. That's really a cop-out and I hate that. To sit there and say, 'I don't like this and I don't like that' is just stupid*."

Writing insipid pop ditties about Judi Collins, I suppose, was a much smarter course of action.

While "*For What It's Worth*" is now the best-remembered '*protest*' song of the 1960s, the most successful one at the time was Barry McGuire's recording of P.F. Sloan's "*The Eve of Destruction*", which was also a curious choice for a '*protest*' song, for reasons best explained by Paul Jones of the band Manfred Mann: "*I think that Barry McGuire must have been paid by the State Department. The Eve of Destruction protests about nothing. It is simply a 'Thy Doom at Hand' song with no point.*"

Yet another curious '*protest*' song of the 1960s was Glen Campbell's rendering of Buffy St. Marie's anti-war standard, "*Universal Soldier*". The very same Glen Campbell told Variety magazine that draft card burners "*should be hung ... If you don't have enough guts to fight for your country, you're not a man*." A young Bob Seger, meanwhile, penned and recorded "*Ballad of the Yellow Beret*", a vicious put-down of draft dodgers, but that might be a bit off-topic.

Returning then to the Buffalo Springfield, I think it is safe to say that, to most music fans, there is a world of difference between a band like the Springfield and a band like the Monkees. That perception, however, is not necessarily accurate. As Unterberger has written, "*there was not nearly as much gauche commercialism separating the Monkees and the bold Sunset Strip vanguard as is commonly believed. The Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and Barry McGuire might have been landing hit records with social protest both gentle and incendiary, but they were tethered to a corporate media establishment in order to deliver those messages. On television's Where the Action Is you could see the Byrds lip-synching The Bells of Rhymney in front of vacuous, grinning beach bunnies and muscle men cavorting on diving boards and plastic inner tubes. When Buffalo Springfield mimed to For What It's Worth on The Smothers Brothers Show, they suffered the insertion of a shot of Tom Smothers pointing a gun at the camera during the line 'there's a man with a gun over there,' to a burst of uproarious canned laughter.*"

Peter Tork

The ties between the bands actually ran far deeper than their mutual fondness for cheesy television appearances. Stephen Stills, it will be recalled, auditioned to be a Monkee, as did singer/songwriters Harry Nilsson and Paul Williams, and Danny Hutton of Three Dog Night. Stills and Tork remained close friends and frequently jammed together. Indeed, both Tork and fellow Monkee Mickey Dolenz joined the Springfield on stage at various local events. And Stills, Young and Dewey Martin all sat in on Monkees recording sessions. On July 2, 1967, guitarist extraordinaire Jimi Hendrix played the Whisky and reportedly blew the roof off the place (*figuratively speaking, that is*). Shortly thereafter, he moved into Peter Tork's house in Laurel Canyon. By the middle of July, Hendrix had joined the Monkees tour as their opening act. He was dropped after just a few dates, however, due to the fact that Monkees fans couldn't quite wrap their heads around Jimi's brand of music. Throughout the summer of 1967, Stephen and Dewey's Malibu home became the site of informal jam sessions involving Stephen Stills, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Miles, David Crosby … and Monkee Peter Tork. Stills played bass, deferring lead guitar duties to Hendrix. All of them ultimately ended up living at Tork's Laurel Canyon spread, which, as previously mentioned, featured a gaggle of young groupies who spent an inordinate amount of time lounging around the pool in various states of undress.

Those jam sessions, both in Malibu and Laurel Canyon, were undoubtedly fueled by massive amounts of LSD. According to an anonymous insider interviewed by John Einarson, "*Owsley used to give Bruce [Palmer] baggies full of acid, a thousand tabs of purple. Somehow he befriended Bruce so we [the band and various hangers-on] never lacked for LSD*."

There was yet one more curious tie between the Monkees and the Springfield: while together in Chicago, unnamed members of both bands were allegedly immortalized by the notorious Cynthia Plaster Caster. Our old friend Frank Zappa would soon take Cynthia under his wing and relocate her to LA to continue her, uhmm, work, just as he had taken the nubile young women who would become the GTOs under his wing. It could reasonably be argued, I suppose, that Zappa did more than anyone to create one of the more peculiar artifacts of the 1960s: the super-groupie.

Ahmet Ertegun, by the way, played a key role in launching the career of Mr. Zappa, so much so that Frank named one of his sons after him. Meanwhile, Zappa's shady manager, Herb Cohen, "*was involved*

with the [Buffalo Springfield] financially ... Stephen knew Herbie from New York," according to Einarson. The Laurel Canyon crowd, to be sure, was a close-knit group – all the more so because so many of them seem to have known one another before arriving there.

Just a couple of weeks before Jimi's Whisky debut, he had dazzled the crowd at the Monterey Pop Festival, where the band under review today, the Buffalo Springfield, had also played – though by most accounts, not very well. Neil Young was taking one of his leaves-of-absence from the band and Doug Hastings filled in on second lead guitar. In addition, Stills brought his buddy David Crosby out on stage to join the band, which by many accounts was a rather poor decision on Stephen's part.

In For What It's Worth, Einarson provides the following evaluation of Crosby's performance: "*His profile was so low key many took no notice of him there save for his ever-present black cowboy hat, and his musical contributions, both instrumentally and vocally, were barely audible*." Some of those who had been on stage with Crosby had a somewhat less charitable view.

According to bassist Bruce Palmer, "*Crosby stunk to high heaven. He didn't know what he was doing ... he was all ego. He came on for forty minutes and embarrassed us."* Guitarist Hastings agreed, explaining that Crosby's *"problem was that he couldn't play rhythm guitar very well, though he thought he could ... that was one of the reasons why we sounded so bad at Monterey.*"

After spending the '*Summer of Love*' jamming with members of both Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys and the Monkees, the Buffalo Springfield hit the road in November 1967 to begin a tour opening for the Beach Boys, a pairing nearly as odd as the Monkees and Jimi Hendrix. Bruce Palmer, whom we have already learned was not one to mince words, had this to say about the Beach Boys as a performing band:

"*They were real lousy musicians but they had terrific harmony and a name. They were a studio group. On stage it was like the Monkees. They would spend weeks and months in the studio with Brian Wilson perfecting harmonies and overdubs, but you put them on stage and they stunk*."

That tour included a stop, curiously enough, at West Point Military Academy, which is, as we all know, a regular stop on most rock tours. While on the road, the members of the Springfield formed a close bond with Dennis Wilson, a bond that would be built upon in April of 1968 when the Springfield again went out on tour with the Beach Boys. That tour was launched on April 5, almost two years to the day from the fabled meeting that allegedly forged the band. It was the last major tour the group would undertake.

Just after returning from the 1968 tour, Dennis Wilson bonded with another local musician, a guy by the name of Charlie Manson. When Dennis introduced his new friend Charlie to his buddies in the Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young in particular was quite smitten – so much so that he reportedly went to record mogul Mo Ostin and recommended that Ostin sign Charlie right away.

How many of you, by the way, were getting a little worried that Manson wasn't going to make an appearance in this chapter of the Laurel Canyon saga?

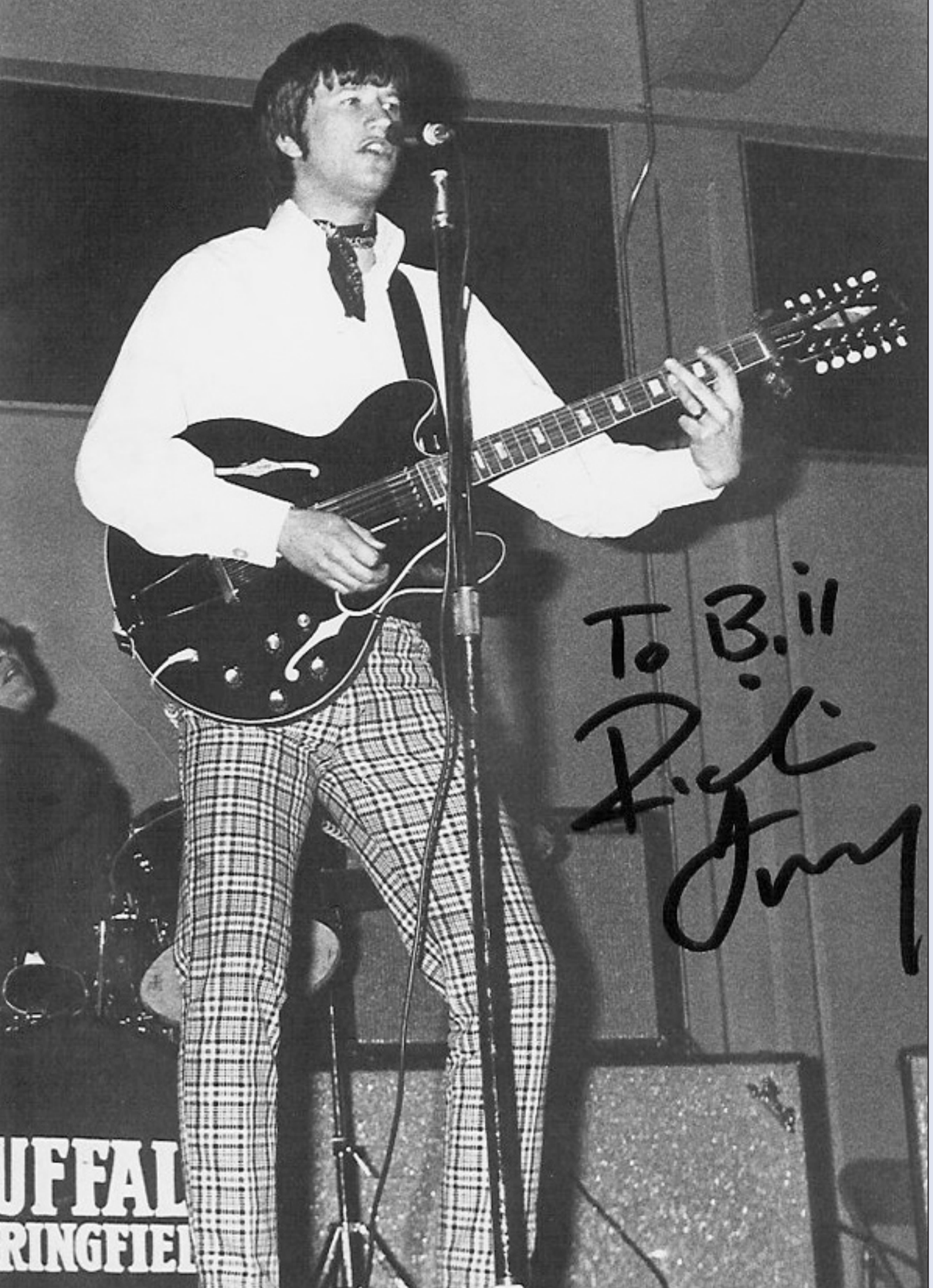
On April 28, the band began playing its last series of local venues. On May 5, at the Long Beach Arena, the Buffalo Springfield played together as a band for the last time. They had been scheduled to play two shows that day, the first at a venue in Torrance but that earlier show never materialized. The band released their third and final album, Last Time Around, some three months later. As with albums by the Byrds and the International Submarine Band, the Springfield's final album is often cited as being a pioneering effort in the creation of the country-rock genre. It appears, by the way, that there wasn't actually a single album that could be considered the '*first*' country-rock album, since the three albums most frequently singled out for that distinction – the Byrd's Sweetheart of the Rodeo, the International Submarine Band's Safe at Home, and the Buffalo Springfield's Last Time Around, were all released, curiously enough, within days of each other in July of 1968.

That was just one curious shift that occurred in the local music scene. The folk-rock movement, you see, didn't really last very long in its original incarnation. It quickly splintered into three distinct new genres: country-rock, psychedelic rock, and the '*introspective singer-songwriter*' school of folk-rock most closely associated with former mental patient James Taylor. None of these musical genres, notably, posed the slightest threat to the status quo. The navel-gazers eschewed social concerns in favor of focusing on tales of personal anguish, the acid rockers largely preached the mantra of '*turn on, tune in, drop out*,' and the country-rockers largely stuck to traditional – which is to say, quite conservative – country music themes.

Following the breakup of the Buffalo Springfield, Richie Furay and sometime bassist Jim Messina went on to form the band Poco. Through various formations, the band was critically acclaimed but never had a great deal of commercial success. Jim Messina ultimately left to become half of Loggins and Messina; his replacement, Randy Meisner, went on to become an Eagle. A guy by the name of Gregg Allman, who played briefly with Poco during its formative days, went on to front the Allman Brothers.

Poco debuted at the Troubadour, which served as the breeding ground for the country-rock movement, in November 1968. Their first album, Pickin' Up the Pieces, hit the shelves six months later, three months after the release of the debut album by country-rock rivals The Flying Burrito Brothers, formed by former Byrds Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman.

Byrd David Crosby, meanwhile, teamed up with the Springfield's Stephen Stills and ex-Hollie Graham Nash (*who had arrived in Laurel Canyon in December 1968 – and soon after moved in with Joni Mitchell*) to form a band first



known as the Frozen Noses, a name inspired by the trio's fondness for cocaine. By the late 1960s, the drug that would later become the drug of choice of the disco crowd had already begun pouring into Laurel Canyon. As glam-rocker Michael DesBarres recalled, "*Every drug dealer was in Laurel Canyon*." Along with the drugs came lots of guns and huge piles of cash. Before long, according to Laurel Canyon chronicler Michael Walker, "*cocaine became a pseudo-currency, like cigarettes in prison.*"

A decade later, the world would catch a glimpse of that dark canyon undercurrent when four battered bodies were bagged and removed from a house on Wonderland Avenue … but we've already covered that.

The newest Laurel Canyon band, of course, was quickly renamed Crosby, Stills & Nash, and by the summer of 1969, they had the top selling album in the country. It would remain on the charts for an unprecedented two years. When the band got ready to hit the road though, there was a little problem; given that Stills was the only serious musician in the band, and it was he who had played virtually all the instruments on that debut album, it was going to be difficult, as Barney Hoskyns noted, "*to translate their layered studio sound to the stage.*" The solution was, as Einarson has written, to bring Neil Young on board, "*to provide more umph to their live sets.*" And so it was that by the end of the year, CSN had become CSNY.

Now the band just needed a rhythm section. Dallas Taylor, who had played on sessions for the first album, was recruited as a permanent drummer. Stills and Young summoned Bruce Palmer to come down from Canada to handle bass duties. According to Palmer, however, that didn't work out, primarily because once he got to LA and "*started rehearsing at Stephen's house with Crosby and Nash, it became real evident that they were nothing but backup singers. They didn't like it and decided to change it. They couldn't take that; they thought they were too big, too famous, too talented. They weren't talented, they were backup singers … It looked to them as if it was Crosby and Nash backing up Buffalo Springfield, being nothing more than harmony singers for Stephen, Neil, myself, and Dallas Taylor.*"

According to Palmer, the first CSN album was "*95 percent Stephen doing everything and he's got his backup singer boys with him. He's been dragging them around with him for 25 years*." Considering that Stills composed the majority of the material, played most of the instruments, and produced and arranged the album, Palmer's assessment seems a reasonable one. In any event, CSNY didn't last too long, dissolving after their 1970 tour. Stills next recruited the ubiquitous Chris Hillman to form Manassas, which also proved to be short-lived. Not long after, David Geffen teamed Hillman with Richie Furay and J.D. Souther to create the Souther, Hillman, Furay Band, which was supposed to be the second coming of CSN but which also proved to be short-lived. During the band's brief tenure, our old friend Phil Kaufman was on hand to serve as road manager.

Crosby, Stills and Nash was not the only Laurel Canyon band to release a debut album in 1969. Three Dog Night, mentored by Beach Boy Brian Wilson, released their self-titled debut in January, and in June, a psychedelic rock band from the Laurel Canyon issued its first LP. Throughout 1968, the band, then known as Nazz, was a regular presence on the Sunset Strip, where they gained a reputation for being heavy on the theatrics but light on the musicianship.

The band was fronted by Vincent Furnier, the boyfriend of Miss Christine of the GTOs. Miss Pamela, aka Pamela Des Barres, described Furnier as "*a rich kid from Phoenix*." A staunch supporter of the colonial occupation of Vietnam (*isn't it time we stopped calling these things 'wars'?*), Vince would later become a golf partner of uber-conservative Senator Barry Goldwater.

Furnier would soon change his own name, and the name of his band, to Alice Cooper, after deciding that he was the reincarnation of a witch who purportedly lived in the seventeenth century. Our old friend Frank Zappa signed the band and its debut album, Pretties For You, was the first release on Zappa's Straight label. After transforming into a shock-rock band, the group would hit it big a few years later with the release of School's Out.

Cooper had a curious connection to another rather eccentric canyon character: Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. In later years, both Cooper and Wilson would receive '*treatment*' from a certain Dr. Eugene Landy, whose handling of Wilson would become quite controversial. According to various sources close to Wilson, Landy quickly took control of virtually all aspects of Brian's life.

On October 19, 1978, academy award-winning actor Gig Young and his fifth wife, Kim Schmidt, were found shot through the head in their New York City apartment. The 64-year-old Young – raised, as would be expected, in Washington, DC – had just married the young art gallery worker three weeks earlier. There was no note found and no one close to

Pastor Richie Furay

Hi, I'm Richie Furay, pastor of Calvary Chapel in Broomfield and I'd like to introduce you to our ministry.

We know Broomfield has many fine churches and we're excited to be a part of the growing number, that have been led to serve and minister to the spiritual needs of this community!

We moved here from Boulder in November of 2002 and have settled in the lower building of the Miramonte Lodge property located at 1200 Miramonte Street!

Calvary Chapel is a non-denominational Christian church with a contemporary style worship-service. Our Bible Study teaching follows a book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse method that we believe is the best way to teach, and learn the Bible. We believe the Bible is the Living Word of God and that it's relevant for us today; therefore, there must be practical application for us to live our lives as we seek to glorify God in our daily living!

The musical part of our worship service is also contemporary. We write many of the songs we sing in our service. The congregation is the choir, so everyone participates as we sing praises of worship to our Lord Jesus Christ together.

The basic tenet of our faith centers on Jesus Christ whom we believe is the Savior of the world. We believe that all men are in need of a Savior because, as the Bible says in Romans 3:23: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

The Bible also says in Romans 6:23: "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ" and we're humbled to have the opportunity to share this message of hope for mankind.

I've been pastoring at Calvary Chapel since 1983 when we began as a home Bible Study outreach ministry of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, CA founded in 1965 by Pastor Chuck Smith, host and teacher of The Word For Today radio ministry.

My background, and road to the ministry and God's calling upon my life, is unique and different than most - although everyone who has come to saving faith in Christ has a unique testimony.

I was the member of two nationally recognized rock and roll bands - the Buffalo Springfield, with whom I was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1997, and Poco, one of the pioneer groups of the country rock sound of the 70's!

Prayer/General Questions

Prayer Request Question?

Service Times

Sundays
9:30-ish am

Children's Service is held in the Lodge, simultaneous to the main service in the sanctuary

Wednesdays
6:00 - 8:00 pm

Contribute Online

CONTRIBUTE ON-LINE

Contribute

Newsletter

the pair could come up with a motive for either to commit suicide, so the incident naturally was written off as a murder/suicide. Young had just taped an episode of the Joe Franklin television show that day and he presumably had given no indication that anything was amiss. The show never aired.

One other curious side note: at the time of the murder/suicide, Young was receiving '*treatment*' from Eugene Landy.

As for the original members of the Buffalo Springfield, Stephen Stills and Neil Young are still known to perform at times. Richie Furay founded the Cavalry Chapel near Boulder, Colorado, where he still serves today as senior pastor. Bruce Palmer died of a heart attack on October 1, 2004. And Dewey Martin was apparently found dead by his roommate on February 1, 2009. No published reports have given a cause of death. He had been living, curiously enough, in an apartment in Van Nuys, California.

"*[Gene] used to slip into these dream states, which I thought was really amazing. He'd go into these dream states and lay down on the couch and go, 'I'll be right back, Patrick.'*"
– Pat Robinson, a friend and bandmate of Gene Clark

"*[Gene] had these multiple personalities*."
– John York, another friend and bandmate of Gene Clark

"*[Gene] did seem like he had a lot on his mind and would often appear distracted. You'd say, 'Hey, Gene, what are you thinking?' and he would go, 'Huh? Oh,' like he was being brought back to reality*."
– Bernie Leadon, yet another friend and bandmate of Gene Clark

In many ways, the Gene Clark story reads a lot like the Gram Parsons story. Both were considered by their peers to be among Laurel Canyon's brightest stars, yet both are now largely forgotten. Both of their lives were cut tragically short (*though Clark lived considerably longer than Parsons*). Both of their deaths were overshadowed to some extent by unusual events that occurred just after their passing. Both were considered pioneers of the country-rock genre. Both played for a time with the Byrds. Both recorded duets with Emmylou Harris, and both employed many of the same musicians on their various solo projects. Both had legions of female admirers. Both had a keen interest in UFOs and believed in alien visitations. Both were notorious drug and alcohol abusers.

Harold Eugene Clark was born on November 17, 1944, in Tipton, Missouri, though the year of his birth was frequently reported as 1941. It seems quite likely that Gene Clark himself was the source of that erroneous biographical detail, to avoid questions about the fact that his father was overseas for all of 1944.

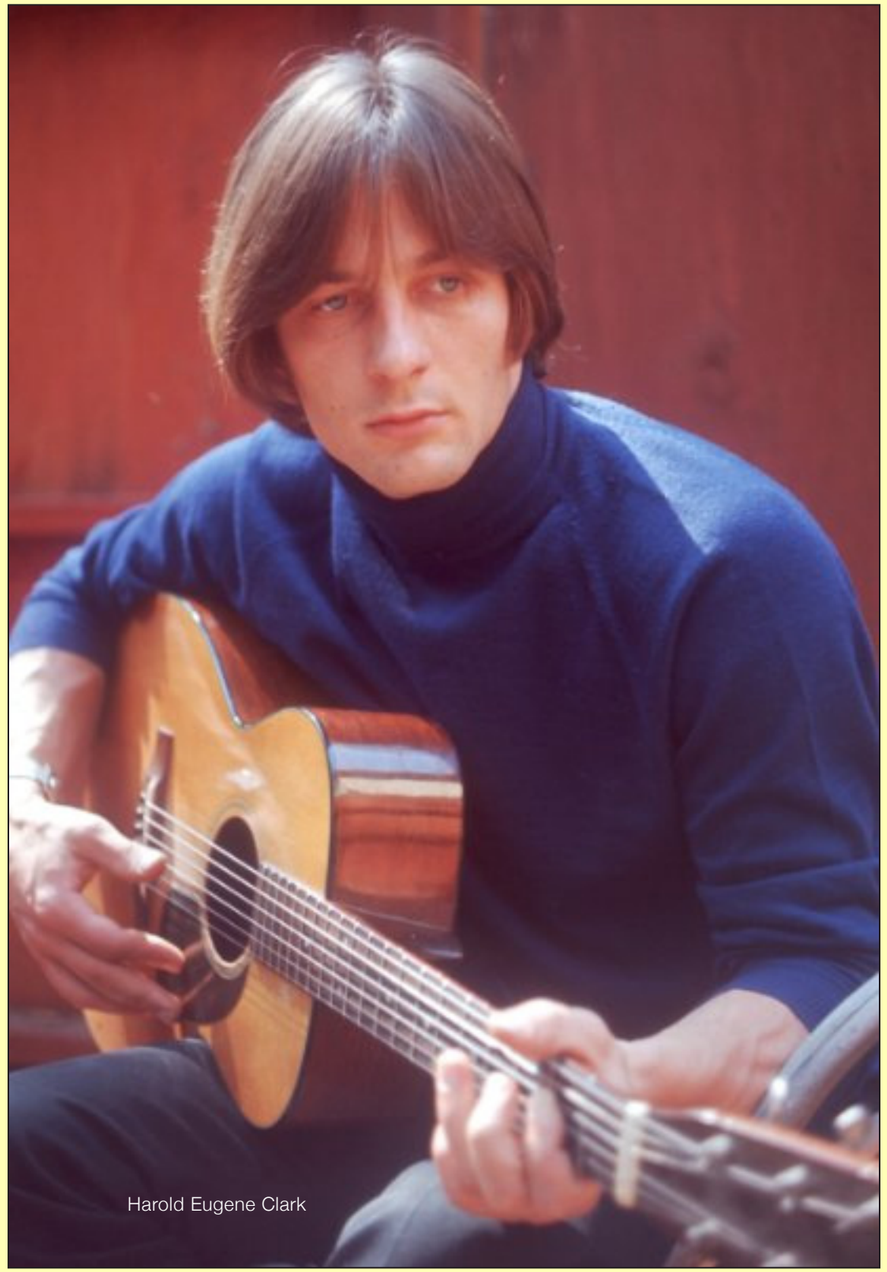
Tipton is a small town – the kind of town where everyone knows one another by name. In fact, Tipton is kind of like a big park where the same oversized family reunion is held every day of the year. As Bonnie Clark Laible told author John Einarson, "*When I was in Tipton, Missouri, the year my grandfather died, in 1954, I found out I was related to almost everyone in the community. Everyone had married people they knew through the various families like Faherty and Sommerhauser. I couldn't throw a stone without hitting a family member!*"

Tipton was founded by Mr. William Tipton Seely, a rather wealthy and influential gent who opened a general store circa 1830. A community soon sprang up around his store, as tended to happen in those days, and Seely named his new little fiefdom Round Hill. A decade or so later, in the 1840s, a group of German immigrant families arrived in the area – the Nieuffers, the Lutzs, the Kammerichs, the Schmidts, the Hoens, the Shrecks and the Sommerhausers. These families proceeded to intermarry to a rather extreme degree.

In the 1850s, Seely lobbied hard to have both the Pacific Railroad and the Butterfield Overland Mail route pass through his little kingdom. Those efforts proved successful, though the railroad was routed a few miles north of Round Hill. Around that new railroad station was born Seely's second town, tiny Tipton, where Gene Clark would spend the early years of his life.

Meanwhile, just before 1800, a group of Irish families led by a Mr. Edmund Faherty settled in southwestern Illinois. In addition to the Fahertys, the group included the Whelans, the O'Haras and the O'Neills. These families also proceeded to intermarry. Some factions of the family eventually crossed over the border into Perryville, Missouri, where they became slave owners. James and Helena Faherty split from the rest of the Missouri herd and moved to Cole Camp, not too far southwest of Tipton. According to chronicler Einarson, the move was recommended by a "*priest who feared too much inbreeding among the families*."

Oscar Faherty, Gene Clark's maternal grandfather, was born and raised near Tipton, as was the woman who was to be his wife and Gene's grandmother, Rosemary Sommerhauser. Before long, the Fahertys and the Sommerhausers were intermarrying at a furious pace. According to Bonnie Clark, "*The Faherty and Sommerhauser families had double cousins going on.*"


Harold Eugene Clark

On the summer solstice of 1920, Rosemary Sommerhauser Faherty gave birth to Mary Jeanne Faherty, Gene Clark's mother. After completing elementary school, Mary Jeanne was sent away to work as a "*domestic servant*" for an unnamed wealthy family living near Kansas City, Kansas. The Depression years were pretty rough, from what I hear, but selling off your barely-teenaged daughter seems a bit harsh.

The other half of Gene Clark's family tree is, curiously enough, shrouded in mystery and secrecy. As chronicler Einarson notes, "*Unlike Jeanne Faherty Clark's well-documented family history, the lineage of Gene's father, Kelly George Clark, is far more murky and mysterious*." Indeed, Einarson's extensive research turned up little more than the fact that Kelly Clark was born on November 11, 1918 in Lenexa, Kansas, and that, according to family lore, there might be Native American blood in the family tree that has been concealed.

Or maybe Pop Clark's history is murky for other reasons. Maybe he wasn't even Gene's dad. What we do know is that Kelly Clark apparently quit high school and went to work for the parks department as a groundskeeper. While tending the grounds at the Milburn Country Club, he met young Jeanne Faherty, who apparently was taken there fairly frequently by her '*employers*' – because most wealthy people, I think we can all agree, take their young servants with them to the country club.

After a relatively brief courtship, the two married on May 29, 1941 and promptly started a family. Bonnie Clark was born on March 13, 1942, just 9½ months after the couple exchanged vows. Kelly Katherine was to be the couple's second child, but she was, alas, reportedly stillborn – on the summer solstice of 1943. Nothing suspicious about that. Nor about the peculiar fact that, while Gene and other members of the family would be laid to rest in the Sommerhauser family plot at St. Andrews cemetery in Tipton, "*Kelly Katherine's is a solitary stone at the far south end of the cemetery.*"

A few months after Kelly Katherine Clark's curious death, Kelly George Clark was called up for radio and gunnery school. Following training, he was assigned to a unit that served as General George Patton's mop-up crew. Clark's crew landed at LeHavre, France and steadily made their way towards Germany. By May of 1945, immediately following the fall of the Third Reich, Clark was in Berlin.

Meanwhile, the third Clark child, Gene, was born in November 1944. Officially, Jeanne Clark was impregnated while her husband was briefly home on leave, presumably in February 1944, though it seems unlikely that he would have been at home at that time. In any event, Gene spent the first years of his life in a house at 304 Morgan Street, directly across the street from a funeral home.

Kelly Clark returned home at the end of World War II and promptly impregnated his wife once again; Nancy Patricia Clark was born on July 19, 1946. The family would continue to grow until there were no fewer than 10 Clark

L-R - Barry McGuire, Becky Jo Benson, Art Podell, Randy Sparks,
Buffalo Bill Boycott, Jackie Miller Davidson, Clarence Treat: the 'new' New Christy Minstrels

siblings, all living in a tiny house far off the beaten path. As a former classmate and friend recalled, "*You had to take a dirt road up and it was the only house back in the woods, way up high. I couldn't believe the first time Gene took me there … It was kind of spooky in a way.*"

As Bonnie Clark has acknowledged, the Clarks "*were known as a very strange family in the community*." I can't imagine why, though it may have had something to do with the family's rather unusual choice of recreational activities, such as throwing knives at laundry detergent boxes: "*Gene was very good at it. We both were. This was one of the things we did as a family function,*" noted Bonnie.

Gene would have a lifelong fascination with knives – and guns. According to friend Joe Larson, after Clark began making money with the Byrds, he "*started buying guns*." In the cover photo for one of Gene's solo albums, he is sitting on a picnic table. As brother Rick Clark has noted, "*there are bullet holes in the table where we would shoot at cans and bottles from the back porch with Gene's guns*." One of those guns was an antique rifle given to Gene by fellow gun aficionado David Crosby. A lot of those peacenik hippie types in Laurel Canyon seem to have been packing heat. Shockingly enough, most of the members of that "*strange family*" living in the backwoods did not fare so well as they grew into adulthood. As of the time of the writing of Einarson's Mr. Tambourine Man (2005), one Clark sibling had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic (*which is, in reality, an arbitrary 'diagnosis,' but let's not get into that*), another suffered from severe bouts of clinical depression, another was homeless due to untreated mental illness, another was on psychiatric meds most of her life before dying suddenly in 1987, another was bipolar, and yet another was diagnosed with severe mental retardation. Even more shockingly, mysterious father Kelly Clark was said to be a raging alcoholic who suffered from severe mood swings!

Gene's formal education began in 1949 at a strict Catholic school in Raytown. According to big sister Bonnie, "*there were truly some abusive people [there]. I can remember some of those nuns being real nightmares*." By 1960, the family had moved to Bonner Springs, Kansas, where Gene attended high school. He was known to hang with a rough crowd during his high school days, and a few of his buddies from those years ended up serving prison time.

On August 12, 1963, Gene Clark, still a few months shy of his nineteenth birthday, was inexplicably offered a spot in the New Christy Minstrels vocal group; he was on a plane to California the very next day. The Minstrels were a very busy touring group, averaging some 300 dates a year, so Gene would spend a lot of time on airplanes during his six-month tenure as a Minstrel. Curiously though, fear of flying would be cited a couple years later as Gene's reason for leaving the Byrds.

One of the gigs the group played, on January 14, 1964, was at the White House as special guests of Lyndon Johnson, who had taken office less than two months earlier following the assassination of John Kennedy. After the performance, Gene and other Minstrels (*including Barry McGuire, who, as was discussed in the last chapter, released Eve of Destruction a couple years later*) went out on the town and partied with Johnson's two daughters,

Lynda Bird and Luci Baines, who were just nineteen and sixteen at the time.

As the story goes, Gene quit the New Christy Minstrels a couple of weeks later, in February of 1964, after hearing the first album released by an obscure British band known as the Beatles. Clark immediately headed out to Los Angeles, as would so many others, where he regularly hung out at the Troubadour, just off the Sunset Strip. It was there that he met one James Joseph McGuinn III, who had, curiously enough, once been in the New Christy Minstrels himself, for exactly one day.

The two quickly formed a folk duo and began writing songs, hoping to soon get bookings at the Troubadour and other local clubs. But according to McGuinn, the pair "*never got to the stage of performing as a duo ... Crosby came along quite quickly*." McGuinn was initially quite wary of the interloper, but the three nevertheless became a trio known at first as the Jet Set. With Crosby, of course, came Jim Dickson, who would transform the trio into the Byrds.

According to Vern Gosdin – who, along with his brother, Rex, played with many of the Laurel Canyon musicians – it was Jim Dickson who "*put the Byrds together, you might say. If I'm telling the truth, this is what I think: I don't think the Byrds had any ideas whatsoever, and Jim Dickson put it all together for them*." Dickson originally envisioned the band as a Beatlesque quartet, with Gene as lead vocalist/rhythm guitarist, Roger on lead guitar and vocals, and Crosby on bass and vocals (*ala Paul McCartney*).

With President and Mrs. Johnson are their daughters — Luci Baines, the younger, at left, and Lynda Bird, at right. The two girls shared the LBJ initials made famous by their father.

This arrangement proved unworkable, however, since Crosby was reportedly unable to sing and play bass at the same time. This then led Dickson to recruit mandolin player Chris Hillman to take over bass duties, leaving Crosby with little to do other than provide harmony vocals. That didn't sit well with Lord Crosby, so he began a relentless campaign aimed at eroding Gene's confidence in his own guitar playing. Crosby's constant ridicule paid off and he soon enough took over rhythm guitar duties.

The five-man band was by then complete: Gene would provide most lead vocals and bang the tambourine, Jim/Roger McGuinn would provide the band's signature 12-string guitar sound and harmony vocals, Crosby would provide serviceable (*at best*) rhythm guitar work and harmony vocals, and Chris Hillman and Michael Clarke would pretend (*initially at least*) to play the bass guitar and the drums.

The band released its first single as the Beefeaters. The record was produced by Jim Dickson, who would go on to guide the Byrds' career, and Paul Rothschild, who would go on to guide the Doors' career. The single, released by Elektra Records, went nowhere. By November of 1964 though, the band, renamed the Byrds, was signed with Columbia Records. Just two months later they would record Mr. Tambourine Man and become huge stars. But there was a hurdle to overcome first; as Einarson notes, "*[Gene] had received his draft notice. Roger and Michael had already dodged that bullet; now it was Gene's turn.*"

Not to worry though; Gene was able to dodge that bullet as well. According to Einarson, Gene was deemed unfit for military service due to an "*old football disease*," which is identified as "*Osgood Schlatter's Disease*." For the record, Osgood Schlatter's is not a "*football disease.*" I'm not at all convinced, to be perfectly honest, that Osgood Schlatter's is a disease at all. I was diagnosed with the same thing when I was a kid and the only difference between me and other kids was that I had a '*disease*' while they had '*growing pains.*' According to the medical community though, it is a real childhood disease with no known treatment that one '*outgrows*' as one approaches adulthood.

Luckily for Gene, it apparently didn't prevent him from playing football, but it did keep him out of the service – which was probably a good thing, because, after all, what use does the military have for a big, strong, powerfully-built former athlete who knew his way around a variety of weapons?

And now, with that out of the way, a correction is in order; regrettably, I claimed in an earlier chapter that Clark was a very good but not a terribly prolific songwriter. That is actually far from the truth (*the fact that no one has alerted me to that egregious error, by the way, illustrates how little-known Clark is today*). Without question, Gene was an astoundingly prolific songwriter. I had assumed otherwise due to the fact that relatively few of his compositions appear on Byrds' albums, which instead feature a lot of covers.

The truth though is that Gene had more than enough songs – and reportedly good songs – to fill the early Byrds' albums. Even Crosby has acknowledged that Clark "*was prolific. He would show up every week with new songs and they were great songs.*" Crosby wasn't so generous though with his assessments of Gene's talents back in the day. According to most accounts, it was the jealousy of Crosby and McGuinn that kept Gene's tracks off the records.

In those days, there wasn't a lot of money to be made by performing and recording music. The real money was in song royalties, so Clark was paid considerably more than the rest of the band. As McGuinn put it, "*Gene was into Ferraris and we were still starving.*" That disproportionate compensation quickly drove a wedge between Clark and the other 2/3 of the original trio. At times, Gene even shared writing credits on his songs just to get them onto albums. The classic Eight Miles High, for example, was written by Gene but credited to Crosby and McGuinn as well (*Crosby reportedly contributed just one line of lyrics and McGuinn handled the arrangement of Gene's composition*).

"*There was this persona and the rest of Gene was somewhere in there. He was hard to get to know ... He could be very warm and loving, but that could change in a heartbeat.*"
– Bonnie Clark, Gene's sister

"*In later years, toward the end, he would have really bad nightmares. He would wake up in the middle of the night screaming ...*"
– Kai Clark, Gene's son

"*It is often difficult for those who knew him – even family members – to reconcile the two Gene Clarks: the cheerful, engaging yet shy loner with the vibrant imagination, and the frustrated, moody recluse who was sometimes prone to violence.*"
– Chronicler John Einarson

As has been noted previously, Vito Paulekas played a key role in the early days of the Byrds. And so it is that we find references to Vito and his entourage in Einarson's telling of the Gene Clark story: "*Vito and Carl were legendary hipsters on the L.A. scene and were into LSD long before anyone else. It was at their studio that Gene believed the Byrds truly found their magic as a group.*" According to Morgan Cavett, the son of Oscar-winning screenwriter Frank Cavett, "*They had this group of hippies before that term came into use. Somehow they had hooked up with the Byrds.*"

When the band launched its first national tour in July 1965, "*Along for the trip were L.A. scene-makers Vito and Carl and their entourage of crazed hippie dancers whose uninhibited gyrations caused quite a stir in the heartlands of America.*" Actually, Vito stayed home while Carl Franzoni led the faction of the troupe that hit the road with the Byrds. Assisting Franzoni was Byrds' roadie Brian McLean, who shortly thereafter would beat out Mansonite Bobby Beausoleil for the rhythm guitarist position in Love.

As troupe dancer Lizzie Donohue would later recall, many of those in America's hinterlands "*thought we were from outer space. In Paris, Illinois, they actually threw us off the dance floor.*" Gene Clark would later remember that the band "*could have played out of tune all day. Nobody ever heard us anyway*." According to many accounts, the band oftentimes did play out of tune all day. And all night as well.

When the band followed up its first national tour with a tour of the UK, they were not well received – in large part because they were notoriously unable to keep their instruments in tune. Often the band would spend more time tuning their instruments between songs than they did actually playing those songs. And by most accounts, the boys made virtually no attempt to forge a connection with the audience. Gene did though forge a bond with the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones, whose life would be tragically cut short a couple years later.

Sometime after that tour, members of the Byrds famously met with members of the Beatles and they all dropped acid together. Some accounts hold that this meeting took place in the Cielo Drive home where Sharon Tate would later be butchered, but it appears to have actually taken place in another home in Benedict Canyon, one that may have been formerly owned by Zsa Zsa Gabor. Laurel Canyon stalwart Peter Fonda was reportedly in attendance, and legend holds that it was he who supplied a very high John Lennon with the line "*I know what it's like to be dead.*"

In March of 1966, a press release announced Gene Clark's departure from the Byrds. McGuinn has alleged that Dickson and co-manager Eddie Ticknor encouraged Gene to split from the band so that they could exploit his solo potential. If so, then they must have been greatly disappointed, as Clark never came close to living up to that potential.

One of the first offers Gene received upon his departure from the Byrds was from drummer Dewey Martin, who invited Clark to join the newly-formed Buffalo Springfield. Clark declined, choosing to form his own band, the first of which was dubbed the Group. As Einarson explains, "*Six weeks after rehearsals began, Gene Clark and the Group debuted at the Whisky-A-Go-Go on June 22 for a two-week stand, on the heels of a dazzling six-week stint by new group Buffalo Springfield*." One of the opening acts during the Group's two-week engagement was a local band known as the Doors.

Around that same time, Clark began having an affair with Michelle Phillips, who lived with hubby John Phillips just a couple of blocks down the canyon (*Gene at the time was living at 2014 Rossila Place, which appears to have been either renumbered or mowed down*). Also living with John and Michelle Phillips, of course, was

DEWEY MARTIN, 68 » MUSICIAN

Drummer never let go of Buffalo Springfield

BY GUY DIXON

For a day or two in the mid-1980s, the animosity lingering from the breakup of the legendary Los Angeles band Buffalo Springfield had faded, at least on the surface. The band's five original members, from drummer Dewey Martin to Neil Young, were at Stephen Stills's house and expectations were high.

Guitarist Richie Furay, a pastor by then, blessed the food. Other musicians and well-wishers came in and out of the rehearsals. The guys – rock legends to the outside world – were having a good time.

Mr. Martin, in particular, seemed to have let go of the resentment he had felt over the years. By all descriptions, the Ottawa-raised drummer was his usual self, a real character, but not bitter. To some, he could seem gruff and in your face – in another era, he could have been a mechanic, talking your ear off in the canteen. In fact, he was an auto mechanic for many of his post-Buffalo Springfield years.

"He had a lot of old Cadillacs he fixed up. Did things like that. He was even fixing some that day they all jammed. He had to fix his muffler that day," said veteran guitarist

Stan Endersby, who was playing with Mr. Martin then in the tribute band Buffalo Springfield Revisited.

"He was larger than life, man," added Tom Leavey, a long-time friend and bassist who worked with Mr. Martin in Los Angeles. "It was no such thing as low profile with Dewey. Everybody knew he was there, wherever that was, whether it was in a convenience store or on stage."

For years after Buffalo Springfield broke up in 1968, Mr. Martin tried to continue using the band's name with different musicians. But audiences sometimes felt confused or cheated by the gig posters, and Mr. Stills and Mr. Young took legal action in the late 1960s. Eventually, Mr. Martin played under the billing New Buffalo Springfield, but he was more or less fired from that band after falling out with the other musicians.

By the mid-1980s, Buffalo Springfield Revisited was touring with a tribute show of the old songs, including the counterculture-defining *For What It's Worth*, with its trademark harmonic guitar ping. Mr. Stills even famously jammed with the band on stage one night at L.A.'s Palomino Club.

That gig was the first time three of the original members – Mr. Martin, Mr. Stills and bassist Bruce Palmer, who died in 2004 – had performed live since the breakup, according to Mr. Endersby.

Mr. Young also kept in touch with Mr. Martin. "I can tell you one thing, Neil Young was always there for him. All through the years, if Dewey had any rough spots, Neil was always there, man," Mr. Leavey said.

But the reunion at Mr. Stills's house, for all the high hopes, wasn't meant to be. Mr. Young famously didn't show to one of the rehearsal meetings, and that was that.

Mr. Martin continued to perform, as he had always done, with various sideline bands. He began his career as a journeyman drummer in Nashville for Roy Orbison, Patsy Cline and other greats. By many accounts, he was the most professionally accomplished member of Buffalo Springfield when it formed.

In later years, he went in and out of retirement, a jobbing musician who was wary of the industry's business side. He and Mr. Palmer have gone down in rock lore as the two Buffalo Springfield members who didn't receive proper recognition. As Mr. Endersby argued, they were the two who had the least business acumen. Mr. Martin spent his final years trying to invent a drum for playing better rim shots.

DEWEY MARTIN

Dewey Martin was born Walter Milton Dwayne Midkiff in Chesterville, Ont., on Sept. 30, 1940, or possibly 1942. Details of his death remained incomplete yesterday; he reportedly died Jan. 31, 2009, in the bathroom of his apartment in Van Nuys, Calif. The cause was unconfirmed, according to Mr. Leavey, who said he was in close contact with Mr. Martin's former common-law wife who was in transit yesterday from Arizona.

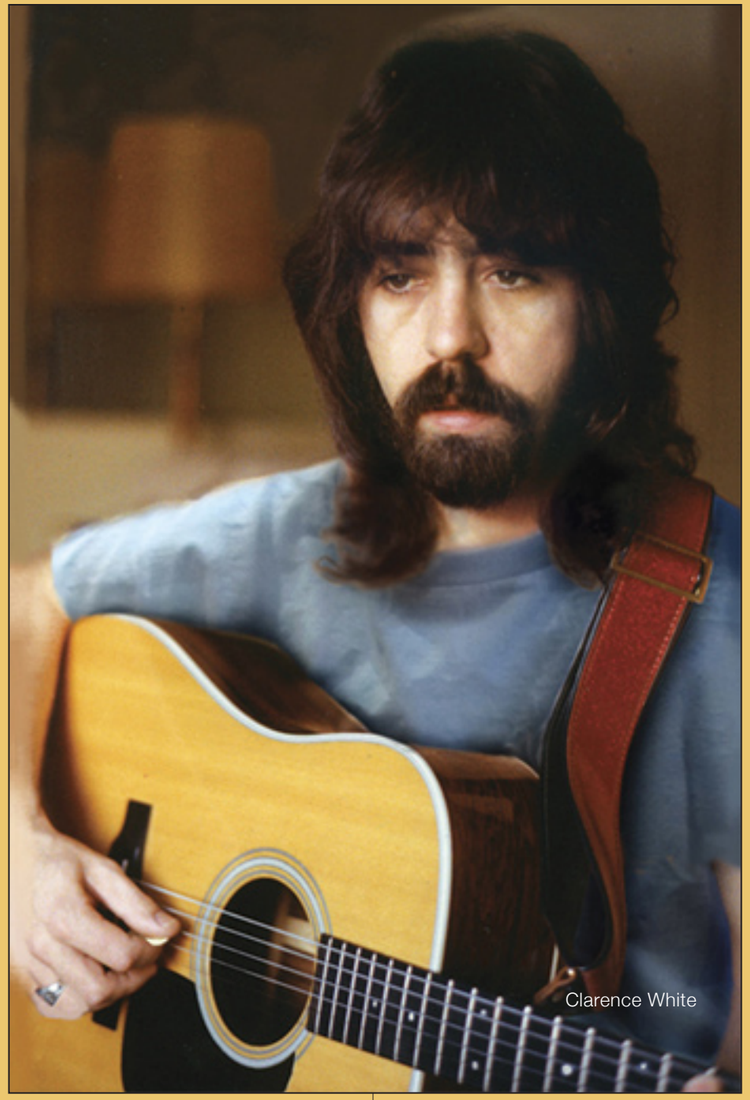
daughter MacKenzie Phillips, who some of you may have seen working the talk-show circuit not long ago, plugging a book about her incestuous relationship with her father.

Following what were reportedly unproductive recording sessions, Gene's first post-Byrds formation broke up. On July 10, he was signed as a solo artist and he entered the studio the next month accompanied by doomed guitarist Clarence White, Brian Wilson handler Van Dyke Parks, our old friend Glen Campbell, the ubiquitous Chris Hillman, and Vern and Rex Gosdin, who had gotten their start alongside – who else? – Chris Hillman in the formation known as the Hillmen.

In January of 1967, Clark's first solo album was released as Gene Clark with the Gosdin Brothers. Like many of the other records we have stumbled upon while on this journey, some fans and critics regard the record as the first country-rock album (*released a year-and-a-half before the country-rock forays by the Byrds and the Buffalo Springfield*). The album, unfortunately, was quickly overshadowed by the Byrd's own Younger than Yesterday, which Columbia released just two weeks after releasing Gene's solo effort.

By March of 1967, Clark had put together a new version of the Group, which debuted at the Whisky with Clark, Clarence White and two members of the Mamas and the Papas touring group, whom Gene had met through his paramour, Michelle Phillips. At the tail end of 1967, Gene briefly rejoined the Byrds, replacing the fired David Crosby. The reunion lasted only a few weeks but it was long enough for Gene to contribute to The Notorious Byrd Brothers, released in January 1968.

When Gene had left the Byrds, by the way, he had done so empty handed. Not so with Crosby, who was given a substantial settlement upon his departure. He used that money to purchase a yacht, which he dubbed the Mayan. Crosby thereafter was known to spend extended periods of time aboard the Mayan, sailing to and from various locations. He was not the only canyon musician to own and operate such a vessel. John Phillips had one as well. So did Dennis Wilson. All three of them also had a passion for controlled substances. And guns. I wonder if there's some kind of connection there?


Clarence White

Following his brief reunion with the Byrds, Clark composed the original score for Marijuana, a short anti-drug film hosted by Sonny "*watch out for that tree!*" Bono. His next project, dubbed the Fantastic Expedition of Dillard and Clark, featured Gene, Doug Dillard (*formerly of the Dillards, from whom Buffalo Springfield, it will be recalled, had obtained their instruments*), Bernie Leadon (*who had been a peripheral member of San Diego's Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, alongside Chris Hillman, and who would later become an Eagle*), and, of course, Chris Hillman.

By this time Gene had married and his wife, Carlie, was an avid reader of occult literature, particularly, as she recalled, "*this lady named Madame Blavatsky.*"

Circa 1971, Clark was approached by his friend and fellow Canyonite, Dennis Hopper, to compose songs for the soundtrack to Hopper's American Dreamer. Around that same time, according to Einarson, "*Gene's running buddies included David Carradine and John Barrymore.*" A rather curious group of friends, to say the least.

According to authors such as Craig Heimbichner (*Blood on the Altar*), Martin P. Starr (*The Unknown God*), and John Carter (*Sex and Rockets*), Dennis Hopper and David's dad, John Carradine, were both members of the infamous Agape Lodge of the OTO, alongside doomed rocket scientist Jack Parsons, actor Dean Stockwell, and doppelgangers L. Ron Hubbard and Robert Heinlein (*who was also, it will be recalled, a Laurel Canyon resident*). According to Gregory Mank (*Hollywood's Hellfire Club*), John Carradine and John Barrymore were also members of the so-called "*Bundy Drive Boys,*" a group that engaged in such practices as incest, rape and cannibalism. And according to Ed Sanders (*The Family*), among the upscale homes visited by a Process Church work group "*was the John Barrymore mansion, located at 1301 Summit Ridge Drive.*"

Of course, just because Clark's inner circle seems to have been drawn from various nefarious occult groups doesn't mean that we should leap to any conclusions about Gene himself, even if his wife was an avid occultist, and even if he was the product of a multi-generational cult town, and even if his sibling was sacrificed stillborn on a major occult holiday, and even if his first home was right across the street from a body drop funeral home.

Moving on then, the year 1972 saw yet another brief Byrds reunion, with another record released in February of 1973. Gene next began recording sessions for a new solo project, financed by his friend Gary Legon, the husband of porn star and Ivory Soap model Marilyn Chambers. Joining Gene on some of the tracks was Emmylou Harris, whose hubby Tom Slocum – a descendant of famed explorer Joshua Slocum – was a member of Gene's inner circle.

After relocating to Albion, California for a time with his wife and kids, Clark moved back to Laurel Canyon, where he moved into a home on Stanley Hills with his new girlfriend, Terri Messina. Born into a considerable amount of money, Messina was the daughter of a prominent area physician. In 1963, she had enrolled in theater arts at UCLA, which quite likely would have placed her in the company of a couple of other UCLA theater arts students – Jim Morrison and Ray Manzarek.

She and Gene moved in together in the summer of 1977. According to Einarson, Messina "*laterally work[ed] in film editing, [but] she was better known in exclusive circles as a supplier of cocaine.*" And heroin. As has been previously discussed, during that time period the "*entire Laurel Canyon lifestyle revolved around cocaine*," and "*Gene fell into line, becoming a legendary partier.*"

Canyon resident Ken Mansfield recalled those dark years: "*That particular point in my life, and most of us, was the craziest time of all, when we were all into drugs the most. Tommy's (Kaye) house was one of the houses we hung out at a lot. David Carradine was my neighbor in Laurel Canyon. Our two properties were side by side. David had a group called Water. I could tell you some wild canyon stories … Looking back it's not a nice memory. Even though we thought we were having a good time, I don't think we really were. Shortly after Tommy Kaye's little girl, Eloise, died in an unfortunate accident, it just seemed like everybody's life got dark and we all kind of lost hope there for a while.*"

There seems to have been a little bit of a problem with little kids in the '60s and '70s dying in "*unfortunate accidents*" in Laurel Canyon. I wonder if Eloise fell through a skylight?

Circa 1978, Clark teamed with former bandmates Hillman and McGuinn for a contrived reunion tour. An album

followed in early 1979, with a second released in early 1980. During that time, according to brother David Clark, Gene "*was hanging around with these really gross characters who were just a bunch of burnouts and he wasn't much better. Cathy Evelyn Smith was there.*" Not long after, Smith would attain a certain amount of notoriety for her involvement in the curious death of John Belushi at the Chateau Marmont, at the mouth of Laurel Canyon.

Following the release of the second reunion album, Clark and a close friend, guitarist Jesse Ed Davis, left LA for Oahu, Hawaii, supposedly to get clean. They returned at the end of 1981, with Gene once again settling into his favorite canyon. Among his close friends at that time were former child star Kurt Russell and his then-wife, actress Season Hubley, who had also taken up residence in Laurel Canyon.

Gene's solo career sputtered on for another decade, though no one really paid much attention. In January 1991, the original members of the Byrds came together for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Clark died just four months later, reportedly of a heart attack. He was just 46 at the time. Three years earlier, his one-time sidekick Jesse Ed Davis had dropped dead on the summer solstice of 1988. He was only 43.

The circumstances of Clark's death remain murky to this day. As Einarson has noted, "*What transpired over the last three days of Gene's life remains clouded by controversy ... conspiracy theories abound; accusations have been leveled.*" For the most part though, Gene has now been all but forgotten. His vast stockpile of unreleased material, however – much of which mysteriously disappeared after his death – likely lives on, albeit credited to others.

According to Einarson, Clark had been fighting to stay sober, but it "*is agreed that he began drinking again on the evening of Wednesday, May 22 ... What happened next depends entirely on who is telling the story. [One witness] claims he searched the house for drugs and did not find any – contrary to claims by others that drugs and drug paraphernalia were present in the house ... there are those conspiracy theorists who continue to insinuate that drugs and certain characters were, indeed, present that night, and that Gene's death was a result of misadventure, necessitating a panicked clean-up campaign that morning.*"

There were apparently numerous people present at Clark's home on the morning of May 24, 1991, as Gene lay dead on the living room floor. One of those people was Saul Davis, who "*took it upon himself to contact the media with the news, another bone of contention with some, given that Saul was not serving as Gene's manager at the time.*" Another was the manager of the property, identified as Ray Berry, who had served during World War II in Special Ops. While people milled about the house, "*arguing over the spoils ... Gene's body continued to lie on the living room floor, face up.*"

Days later, David Carradine caused quite a stir at Gene's open-casket memorial service. Former bandmate Pat Robinson remembered it well: "*When Carradine came up, he wasn't as much drunk as he was on acid, I think, and his girlfriend and business manager at the time was there with him. And we're standing there and Carradine says, 'You cocksucker ...' and grabs Gene by the lapels. When you pull somebody up from a coffin and they have nothing inside for guts they bend higher up. It was really shocking to see that. And Carradine goes, 'You pissed on my daughter when she was thirteen.' And he said it pretty loud and then he says, 'I saw him snicker, boys, heh heh.' Oh, man, that was weird.*"

You think so? Perhaps weirder still is that many of those who were in attendance remember hearing something a little different: "*You fucked my daughter when she was thirteen.*" Maybe Carradine had mistaken Clark for Roman Polanski. Or John Phillips. Or maybe that's just what everyone was doing in Laurel Canyon.

In any event, none of the original members of the Byrds bothered to attend the service. When it was over, Gene was laid to rest in tiny Tipton.

Belushi Funeral

John Phillips

"*Our music was far from political or antiwar … I never felt comfortable with political advocacy*."

– John Phillips

"*There were no political speeches or overt protest songs performed*."

– John Phillips, discussing the Monterey Pop Festival, of which he was a key organizer

Thus far on this journey, we have seen how what are arguably the two most bloody and notorious mass murders in the history of the City of Angels – the Manson Family murders of the occupants of the home on Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon, and the so-called Four-On-The-Floor bludgeoning murders of four Laurel Canyon drug dealers on Wonderland Avenue – were directly connected to the Laurel Canyon music scene.

But the city of Los Angeles can boast of one other particularly notorious murder, which stands to this day as both the most gruesome single-victim murder and the most famous unsolved murder in the city's history.

On January 15, 1947, the mutilated body of aspiring actress Elizabeth Short was found posed in a field. The ritualistically butchered body was nude, sliced cleanly in half, and completely drained of blood. Parts of the body had been removed, after which the corpse had been thoroughly sanitized. Bruising clearly indicated that the young girl had been savagely beaten. Forensic evidence suggested that she had been forced to eat feces during her tortuous ordeal. She was quickly dubbed the '*Black Dahlia*,' and it is by that name that she is known and written about today.

Much of what has been written about the brief life of Ms. Short is contradictory. Among the facts that seem to be agreed upon is that she had recently worked at a military facility that is now known as Vandenberg Air Force Base, and that she had some kind of close connection to a US Naval hospital in San Diego, where she may have also worked. That is, in any event, what she had indicated in a letter to her mother.

This murder occurred some twenty years before Laurel Canyon's glory days. It would seem rather foolish then to suggest that all three of Los Angeles' most notorious murder cases were connected to the peace-and-love scene flowering in Laurel Canyon in the 1960s and 1970s. But that is, nevertheless, exactly what I am going to do. It is, admittedly, an indirect connection, and, since the case remains officially unsolved, it is a tentative one as well, but it is a connection nonetheless.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Black Dahlia murder, or who have only read about the case and never actually seen the brutality inflicted upon Ms. Short, please be advised that you are about to see for yourself just how barbaric this crime was. The images are absolutely horrifying – but that is, unfortunately, what elite ritualized crime looks like. You have been warned.

"*John [Phillips] was the ultimate controller*."

– Mamas and the Papas producer/manager Lou Adler

"*She was practically his slave.*"

– Michelle Phillips, describing John's third wife, Genevieve Waite

the pentagon

Our story begins on August 30, 1935, with the birth of John Edmund Andrew Phillips to parents Claude and Edna Phillips. Claude was a retired Marine Corps officer and engineer. His father, John Andrew Phillips, a prominent architect, one day "*mysteriously fell to his death*" on a construction site, according to John Phillips' autobiography, "*Papa John*". That kind of thing tends to happen to family members of people associated with Laurel Canyon.

John's mother, Edna, had what most folks would consider a rather unconventional upbringing. Her mother was a psychic/faith healer, and many of her eleven siblings were well known locally as gunfighters and bandits. When Edna was just a year old, she was – and I am neither making this up nor stealing it from the plot of some hack Hollywood film – purportedly kidnapped by Gypsies! Her father allegedly found her a year later down in Mexico. How he would have done so remains something of a mystery (*though I'm guessing that maybe he had some help from Albert DeSalvo's mother, who supposedly likewise tracked down young Albert after his father had sold him to a farmer as a slave; have I mentioned lately, by the way, that to fully understand the Laurel Canyon story, you really need to read Programmed to Kill?*).

Edna was just fifteen when she met and began a relationship with Claude Phillips, who according to legend had supposedly won an Oklahoma bar from a fellow serviceman in a poker game on the way home from France at the close of World War II – which seems about as credible as various other aspects of Phillips family history, as told by John. By eighteen, Edna had given birth to the couple's first child, Rosie Phillips, born on New Year's Eve, 1922.

Rosie would later become a career employee of the Pentagon, where John's first wife, the daughter of an intelligence operative, would also find work. Years later, according to John, Rosie's daughter Patty would be "*found dead of an overdose in a girlfriend's apartment in North Hollywood … There were mysterious questions surrounding her death.*" As I just noted a few paragraphs back, that kind of thing tends to happen.

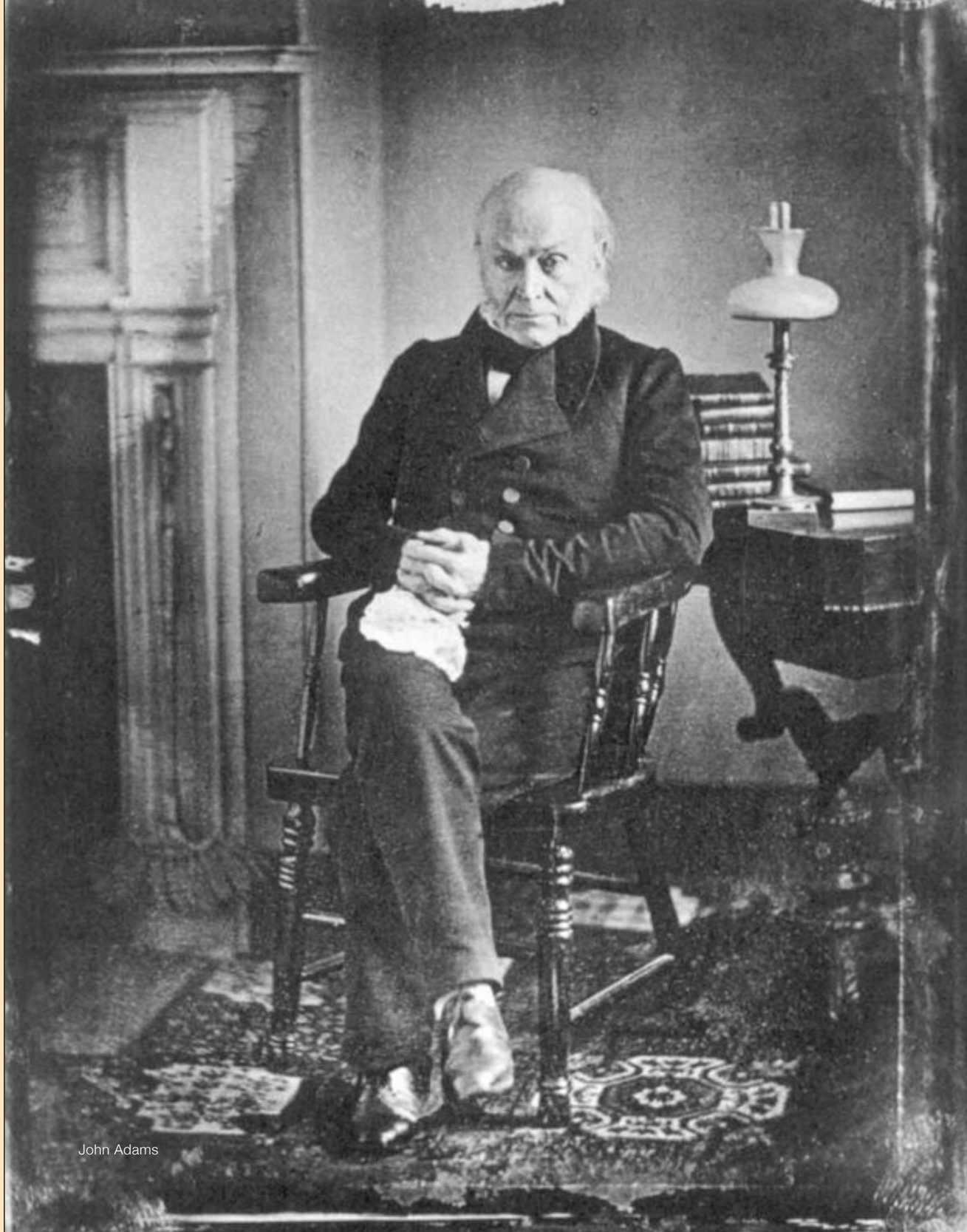
In the late 1920s, Claude Phillips was commissioned to Haiti, where he remained for four years. He was then sent back to Quantico, then shipped off to Managua, Nicaragua, before finally returning to Alexandria, Virginia, where John Phillips, who would grow up to become arguably the most important music figure in the canyon.

John attended a series of strict Catholic and military schools and served as an altar boy. According to his own account though, he also had a darker side, which included forays into vandalism, auto theft, breaking and entering, fighting, and other assorted mischief. His mother, meanwhile, routinely cruised for men – when not spending time with a US Army Colonel named George Lacy. John would later be told that his real father was a US Marine Corps doctor named Roland Meeks, who died in a Japanese POW camp during WWII.

Phillips played basketball at George Washington High School, from where he graduated in 1953. He then scored an appointment to Annapolis Naval Academy, but soon dropped out. One of his first paying jobs was working on a fishing charter boat. As John later recalled it, the crew consisted of him, a retired Navy officer, and four retired Army generals. Seems like a perfect fit for one of the future guiding lights of the hippie movement. Phillips also, for a brief time, tried his hand at selling cemetery plots.

As previously noted, John's first wife was the aristocratic Susie Adams, descendent of President John Adams (*at right*) and occasional practitioner of voodoo. Their first son, Jeffrey, was born on Friday the 13th in December of 1957. Shortly after that, John found himself in, of all places, Havana, Cuba, just as it was about to fall to the revolutionary forces of Fidel Castro. According to Phillips, he and his traveling companions "*were once whisked off the street by a director, straight into a TV studio to appear on a live Havana variety show.*"

Many of you, I'm sure, have had a similar experience.



John Adams

Some months later, in late 1958, Phillips flew to Los Angeles and began performing on amateur nights at Pandora's Box on the legendary Sunset Strip. His first band, The Journeymen, featured Phillips, Scott McKenzie and Dick Weismann. It was while touring with this formation that John Phillips met a very young Holly Michelle Gilliam.

Michelle was born November 10, 1944 in Long Beach, California, to a father variously described as a merchant mariner, a movie production assistant, and a self-taught intellectual. When Michelle's mother, a Baptist minister's daughter, reportedly died of a brain aneurysm when Michelle was just five, Gardner "*Gil*" Gilliam took his daughters and promptly relocated to Mexico, ostensibly to attend college on the GI Bill. They remained there for several years. Upon their return to Southern California, Gil found work as an LA County probation officer. According to John, Gil's work "*often required him to go out of town*," though one would think that that would make it rather difficult for him to keep tabs on his charges. In 1958, while future-husband John was vacationing in war-torn Cuba, Michelle found a new mother-figure in twenty-three-year-old Tamar Hodel. Tamar's father, Dr. George Hodel, was described by Vanity Fair in December 2007 as "*the most pathologically decadent man in Los Angeles*" and "*the city's venereal-disease czar and a fixture in it's A-list demimonde.*" Also noted in the article was that "*George Hodel shared with Man Ray a love for the work of the Marquis de Sade and the belief that the pursuit of personal liberty was worth everything*." In other words, Hodel embraced that all-purpose Luciferian creed, "*Do what thou wilt*."

Tamar and her siblings had "*grown up in her father's Hollywood house, which resembled a Mayan temple, was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright's son, and was the site of wild parties, in which Hodel was sometimes joined by director John Huston and photographer Man Ray*." The luxurious home reportedly features, among other amenities, a subterranean walk-in vault, which is always a nice thing to have around. Within the walls of that singularly odd Hollywood Hills home, which lies about three miles due east of the mouth of Laurel Canyon, Tamar talks of how she "*often 'uncomfortably' posed nude … for 'dirty-old-man' Man Ray and had once wriggled free from a predatory John Huston.*" Her own father, not so shockingly, "*had committed incest with her. 'When I was 11, my father taught me to perform oral sex on him.'*" Her father also "*plied her with erotic books, grooming her for what he touted as their transcendent union,*" and freely shared her with his wealthy and influential friends.

"*To the girl's horror, she became pregnant*" at the tender age of fourteen – with her father's child. "*To her greater horror, she says, 'my father wanted me to have his baby.'*" A friend, nevertheless, took her to get an abortion. Dr. George was so incensed that, according to Tamar, he "*struck her on the head with his pistol*," prompting her stepmother (*who also happened to be John Huston's ex-wife*) to assist her in going into hiding.

Dr. George Hodel was arrested and charged with, among other things, offering his young daughter to several friends at an orgy. The sensational 1949 incest trial featured a witness who took the stand to describe being hypnotized by Hodel at a party; she also claimed that she had witnessed him attempt to hypnotize other young women.

Allegations that the rich and powerful were dabbling in incest, hypnotism/mind control, pedophilic orgies, and Luciferian philosophies must surely have been shocking to Angelenos in the 1940s, as they would still be to most Americans today, but to these jaded eyes and ears, it just sounds like business as usual. Also sounding like business as usual is that Tamar was roundly vilified by both the press and the defense team (*led by Jerry Giesler*), and Dr. George Hodel was acquitted.

Far more shocking even than all of that is the then-unknown fact that, even while Hodel was standing trial on the sensational charges, he was, and still is today, a prime suspect in the Black Dahlia murder case! There have been, of course, numerous suspects identified in the case, including actor/director Orson Welles. But George Hodel does seem to be a much more likely suspect than most of those who have been identified. And his possible guilt, needless to say, does not exclude others from likely complicity as well. The mistake that virtually all investigators of

Hodel House

Hodel House

this case have made is assuming that there is only one culprit. The most likely scenario is that Hodel committed the crime in conjunction with various others in his pedophilic, Luciferian social circle. Man Ray, for example, is a compelling suspect, given that the posing of Ms. Short's body appears to mimic "*The Minotaur*" (*below*), one of his better-known photographs. Man Ray, by the way, was something of the Robert Mapplethorpe of his era – the same Robert Mapplethorpe, it should be noted, whom investigative journalist Maury Terry has similarly linked to the Son of Sam case and various other ritualized murders (*for more on George Hodel, Man Ray and the Black Dahlia murder, see Black Dahlia Avenger by Steve Hodel [George's son and a former LAPD homicide detective] and Exquisite Corpse by Mark Nelson and Sarah Hudson Bayliss*).

How it is that the fourteen-year-old daughter of a lowly probation officer fell into the orbit of the daughter of the wealthy and influential George Hodel (*Hodel's former home is currently valued at $4.2 million*) has never been explained, but Tamar, described by Michelle as "*the epitome of glamour*," quickly took the youngster under her wing, buying her clothes, enrolling her in modeling school, teaching her to drive, and providing her with a fake ID and a steady stream of prescription drugs – obtained, one would presume, from her father.

According to Michelle, "*Tamar put on perfect airs around my dad and when it became necessary she would sleep with him.*" Whatever works, I guess. That perhaps explains why, in early 1961, Gil didn't have a problem with allowing his underage daughter to move to San Francisco with the daughter of a violent pedophile. Soon enough, Tamar found herself in a relationship with Journeyman Scott McKenzie, and bandmate John Phillips began coming by Tamar and Michelle's room on a nightly basis.

It wasn't long before Michelle, still just seventeen, was romantically involved with twenty-six-year-old Phillips, despite the fact that John was still married to Adams, with whom he by then had two children, Laura MacKenzie Phillips having been born on November 10, 1959 in Alexandria. Father Gil, who had himself recently taken a sixteen-year-old bride (*one of a string of six wives*), still wasn't concerned. And it's probably safe to assume that Phillip's father, who had pursued his bride when she was just fifteen, wouldn't have been too concerned either.

It should be noted that Steve Hodel believes his father, Dr. George Hodel, was responsible for the Black Dahlia murder. Here's a link to Steve's web page where he presents some rather compelling evidence for the assertions he's made against his father:

http://abytesgen01.securesites.net/cgi-bin/mt/mt-search.cgi?IncludeBlogs=89&search=Hollywood%20film

Again, a warning to readers, the next two pages may be disturbing to some.

Spell-Checking A Serial Killer:
Reexamining LA's 1944 Georgette Bauerdorf "Bathtub Murder" Note

by
Steve Hodel
on March 4, 2012

http://abytesgen01.securesites.net/cgi-bin/mt/mt-search.cgi?IncludeBlogs=89&search=Hollywood%20film

In August, 2003, Jon L. Breen, the highly respected, veteran mystery-writer and two-time MWA Edgar Award winner, wrote an early critique of my book, Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder.

Breen's thoughtful critique entitled "*Daddy Did It*" was published in The Weekly Standard on August 18, 2003. His six-page review was well-balanced and pointed to what he then considered to be some of the strengths and weaknesses in my investigation.

One of the weaknesses highlighted by Jon Breen was from the section currently under review – the Bauerdorf Note. Here is the extract from Mr. Breen's 2003 critique:

"*Hodel obviously is not required to make an iron clad case... Still; reasoning that is far-fetched or obviously erroneous serves to cast further doubt on his main case. For example, Hodel compares one of his father's typewritten letters with one purportedly from the killer of Georgettle Bauerdorf, victim of a 1944 bathtub murder. Hodel assumes that using a double hyphen to represent a dash is somehow unusual. On the contrary, it is standard. Word processing programs do it automatically.*"

Mr. Breen ended his 2003 review with the following:

"*So what is the final verdict on Black Dahlia Avenger? Its accounts of cover-ups and civic corruption are all too believable, and much of the circumstantial evidence it presents against George Hodel is persuasive. ...Has Steve Hodel solved the case? I think so, but he has some tidying up to do for the paperback edition.*"

Five years later, he included his original full review of Black Dahlia Avenger in his excellent book, A Shot Rang Out: Selected Mystery Criticism (*Ramble House 2008*) adding the below P.S.:

"*Postscript 2008: Hodel did in fact include additional material to strengthen his case... One writer who believes his solution is Orson Welles biographer, Simon Callow, who examines the evidence against Welles with some admiration in "Orson Welles: Hello Americans", (2006) before averring that Hodel's conclusion is definitive.*"

A note from Steve Hodel:

"*A massive amount of circumstantial evidence linking George Hodel to the Georgette Bauerdorf Murder underscoring it as one of the "Lone Woman Murders" has surfaced since the original publication of BDA. That information/evidence has been presented elsewhere in my writings. This blog merely examines and updates the information pertaining to the Bauerdorf Note.*"

In October 1962, a year or so after meeting Michelle, John curiously found himself in Jacksonville, Florida (*alongside Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport*) for "*two weeks of rest and rehearsal*" during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For a guy who "*never felt comfortable with political advocacy*," John seems to have had a keen interest in Cuban affairs. Two months later, on New Years Eve 1962, Holly Michelle Gilliam became John Phillip's second wife. She also joined his reconfigured band, as did Canadian Denny Doherty, who had formerly been with the Mugwumps alongside Cass Elliot. This new lineup was dubbed the New Journeymen.

The newly-formed trio promptly embarked on a curious Caribbean adventure, arriving first at St. Johns, where John has claimed that they "*snorkeled on acid*" for several weeks. They next ferried over to St. Thomas, where they set up camp at a dive beachfront boardinghouse known as Duffy's. Soon enough, Ellen Naomi Cohen, better known as Cass Elliot, showed up with John's nephew, who was a childhood friend of hers. Cass had been born in Baltimore but had grown up in Alexandria, where, like Phillips, she had attended George Washington High School.

As the legend goes, Cass waited tables at the dive while the trio performed folk songs. What they were really doing there remains something of a mystery, though in Papa John, Phillips did drop a clue: "*The town was crawling with drunken Marines and sailors on their way home from Vietnam*."

Moving on from the boardinghouse, the group next took over an unfinished home on Creeque Alley, where, according to John, they were known as "*the island's open house and everyone was welcome to our commune*." At some point though the governor supposedly ordered them off the island "*because he thought his nephew was doing drugs with the crazies at Creeque Alley*." The band had formalized its new lineup of John Phillips, Michelle Phillips, Denny Doherty and Cass Elliot, and they had a whole album's worth of material written. That first album would feature such enduring classics as "*California Dreamin', Monday, Monday, and Go Where You Wanna Go*". On none of the bands subsequent albums would they produce anywhere near the level of songwriting that they were allegedly able to achieve on that Caribbean adventure.

Though isolated on that Caribbean island, the songs the group brought back to LA with them just happened to be of the soon-to-emerge folk-rock variety. In Papa John, Phillips quotes Doherty as saying that everyone was "*evolving toward the same sound at the same time without really communicating with each other about it*." It was, I suppose, just the way things were fated to be – or it could be that everyone was following the same script, written by unseen others.

Before helping to spearhead the folk-rock movement though, the quartet first had to get off the island, which Phillips presents as a high-risk venture: "*We tried to get off the island quietly. We split in groups at the airport to look inconspicuous … We went at night so there wouldn't be any credit checks done on me*."

Within a month of arriving in LA, the band had a producer/manager (*Lou Adler, a Jewish kid who had grown up in a tough, Hispanic section of East LA*) and a record deal, and John and Michelle were at home in a comfortable house on Lookout Mountain in Laurel Canyon. They would soon be able to afford to purchase Jeanette McDonald's former Bel Air mansion at 783 Bel Air Road, which featured "*hand-carved wooden gargoyles*" and "*a walk-in vault beneath the house*," which, as I already mentioned, is a very handy feature. Sitting on five acres, the lavish home, with five Rolls Royces in the driveway, was the site of virtually nonstop partying.

The new lineup, of course, needed a name, and John pushed hard for the occult-based "*Magic Cyrcle*", which the band was briefly known as before ultimately settling on "*The Mamas and the Papas*". There would be other indications as well that Phillips had a keen interest in the occult. He would later, for example, start his own label and call it Warlock Records. And his third wife, Genevieve Waite, was an avid follower of Aleister Crowley.

The Mamas and the Papas proved to be a rather short-lived band, recording and performing just from 1965 to 1968 (*with a brief reunion in 1971 to satisfy contractual obligations to their record company*). During that time, the band produced five albums and eleven top 40 singles. To date, the lineup has sold nearly 100,000,000 albums.

The first single, released in 1965, was Go Where You Wanna Go, which failed to chart. Their next release, California Dreamin', shot up to #4. Their freshman album, If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears, released in early 1966, rose to the very top of the charts, their only album to do so. Their only #1 single, Monday, Monday, followed the release of the album. It was all downhill from there.

While recording their second album in June 1966, Michelle was discharged from the band due to the fact that she was having an affair with Denny Doherty, which was causing severe friction in the group. By August, she was back, though that didn't prevent the group's second album from performing rather poorly. The third, recorded in 1967 and ironically entitled Deliver, failed to live up to its name. Then in June of that year, The Mamas and the Papas delivered a closing set at the Monterey Pop Festival that almost everyone agrees sucked ass.

It wasn't hard though for the band to score that coveted closing slot, given that Phillips had played a key role in organizing the event. Monterey proved to be, according to Barney Hoskyns, the "*moment when the underground went mainstream.*" As Rolling Stone noted in its Fortieth Anniversary Edition, "*The plan for a new kind of festival was spearheaded by John Phillips, the leader of the Mamas and the Papas, and Lou Adler, an influential producer and the band's manager.*" Also noted was that the "*road to Monterey began with Alan Pariser, a young heir to a paper-manufacturing fortune*," just as the road to Woodstock began with John Roberts, a young heir to a pharmaceutical manufacturing fortune, but that's another story entirely.

Two months after Monterey, the band made their final television appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. Two months after that, the quartet headed off to Europe while recording their fourth album, The Papas and the Mamas. That album's first single was the Laurel Canyon-inspired 12:30 (*Young Girls are Coming to the Canyon*). Shortly thereafter, the band broke up. John tried his hand at a solo career with the wildly unsuccessful result being the release of The Wolf King of LA. To satisfy record label demands, the group briefly reformed for their fourth album, People Like Us.

Following that unsuccessful venture, the band once again dissolved.

"This is going to break your heart, but much of the music you heard in the '60s and early '70s wasn't recorded by the people you saw on the album covers. It was done by me and the musicians you see on these walls … Many of these kids didn't have the chops and were little more than garage bands … At concerts, people hear with their eyes. Teens cut groups slack in concert, but not when they bought their records."

– Hal Blaine, longtime drummer for the Wrecking Crew,
quoted in the Wall Street Journal on March 23, 2011

Before moving ahead with the John Phillips saga, I first need to pose an extremely important question to all my readers: is anyone out there in the market for a slightly used, covert film studio? If so, then all you need do is pull about $6.2 million out of your penny jar (*though in today's housing market, you might be able to cut a better deal*) and Lookout Mountain Laboratory can be yours! And if you act fast, you might be able to get a package deal on the lab and the Hodel house!

Another item worth noting: as reported by the San Francisco Chronicle on January 28, 2011, "*Ron Patterson, the flamboyant, free-spirited creator of the Renaissance and Dickens fairs, died Jan. 15 at a friend's house in Sausalito after an illness. He was 80*." As staff writer Carolyn Jones noted, Patterson's creation "*was sort of a medieval precursor to Burning Man*." And Burning Man is, of course, a rather explicitly occult ritual first performed on the Summer Solstice of 1986 and now performed every summer in Nevada's Black Rock Desert before an audience of 50,000+.

What does any of that though have to do with Laurel Canyon? As we have seen so many times before, all roads on the Conspiracy Superhighway seem to lead to Laurel Canyon: "*In the beginning, the Renaissance Faire was an experiment in Mr. Patterson's backyard. In the early 1960s, Mr. Patterson and his wife, Phyllis, who were both interested in theater and art, began hosting children's improvisational theater workshops at their Laurel Canyon (Los Angeles County) home*."

One naturally wonders whether aspiring thespian and golden child Godo Paulekas (*originally cast, it will be recalled, to play Satan in Kenneth Anger's Lucifer Rising*) was involved in those workshops. In any event, there is certainly nothing creepy about children's workshops being hosted in a small, tight-knit community that was home to more than its fair share of pedophiles, so let's just move along.

One last item of note, this one from, of all places, the pages of Sports Illustrated circa June 29, 1981. The following excerpt is from a short piece written by publisher Philip Howlett to introduce readers to writer Bjarne Rostaing: "*Born in Lincoln, N.Y., Rostaing grew up in various places in Connecticut, where he attended what he recalls as an even dozen schools. 'I got my B.A. and master's in English from the University of Connecticut,' he says. 'Then I did part of a Ph.D. at the University of Washington before going into the Army Intelligence Corps in 1959. We had Paul Rothchild, who later became producer for The Doors and Janis Joplin, to give you some idea of what the unit was like*.'"

I'm guessing that it was like countless other intelligence units designed to churn out shapers of public opinion, whether actors, novelists, newsmen, or, in this case, sportswriters and producers of popular music. It is quite shocking, of course, to learn that the handler of two of Laurel Canyon's most influential and groundbreaking bands (Love and the Doors) had an intel background. Apparently the search is still on for anyone of any prominence in the Laurel Canyon scene who didn't have direct connections to the intelligence community.

Anyway … during the heyday of the Mamas and the Papas, John and Michelle Phillips knew, and regularly played host to, virtually everyone of importance in the canyons. In addition to all the singers and musicians living in Laurel Canyon, the power couple's circle of friends included Warren Beatty, Peter and Jane Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Terry Melcher and girlfriend Candace Bergen, Marlon Brando, Roman Polanski and Sharon Tate, Abigail Folger and Voytek Frykowski, soon-to-be-dead gossip columnist Steve Brandt, Larry Hagman, presidential brother-in-law Peter Lawford (*fresh from his probable involvement in the murder of Marilyn Monroe*), Dennis Hopper, Ryan O'Neal, Mia "*Rosemary's Baby*" Farrow, ethereal Freemason Peter Sellers, and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Hal Blaine has played on 50 number one hits, over 150 top ten hits and has recorded, by his own admission, on over 35,000 pieces of music over four decades of work. Blaine is a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He is widely regarded as one of the most Prolific Drummers in recording music history.

And a short, scraggly singer/songwriter by the name of Charlie Manson.

There were, to be sure, numerous ties between John Phillips, the '*Wolf King of LA,*' and Charles Manson. And ties as well between bandmate Cass Elliott and Manson. And between Philips and Cass and the Cielo Drive victims. John Phillips, for example, had invested $10,000 in Jay Sebring's business venture, Sebring International (*rumored to have been a front for various illegal activities, including drug trafficking*). Michelle Phillips had a brief affair with Roman Polanski in London while Polanski was married to the soon-to-be-dead Sharon Tate (*during that same sojourn to London, Tate was reportedly initiated into the practice of witchcraft*).

Mama Cass, as previously noted, lived across the street from the house occupied by Folger and Frykowski at 2774 Woodstock Road. Both homes were frequently visited by known drug dealers. Regulars at Cass's home included Pic Dawson (*also a regular at the Frykowski/Folger home and at the Tate/Polanski home*), the son of a US State Department official who, according to John Phillips, was suspected by authorities "*of using diplomatic pouches to move drugs between countries*," and Billy Doyle, a local dealer who was infamously filmed while being flogged at the Tate/Polanski house just three days before the murders (*according to Dennis Hopper*). Another regular was Bill Mentzer, later convicted of the brutal murder of Cotton Club producer Roy Radin and labeled '*Manson II*' by journalist Maury Terry. The LAPD once described Mentzer as a member of "*some kind of hit squad*."

So dark was the scene at the home of the '*Lady of the Canyon*' that, according to Terry, four of the LAPD's initial prime suspects in the Tate killings were drug dealers associated with Elliott. And yet, curiously enough, all of the canyon's peace-and-love spewing musicians were regulars at Mama Cass's home as well. As Rolling Stone noted in its Fortieth Anniversary Edition, "'*Mama' Cass Elliott's cozy canyon house functioned as a sort of rock salon*." In a similar vein, Barney Hoskyns wrote in Hotel California that "*Cass kept permanent open house*."

Also noted in Hoskyn's tome was that the Laurel Canyon scene "*all spun around him and Cass*," with the "*him*" in this case being David Van Cortlandt Crosby, who, like Cass, had an insatiable appetite (*by his own account*) for potent pain killers like Demerol, Dilaudid and Percodan. Crosby was one of many Canyonites who regularly dropped by Cass's place to hang out and engage in impromptu jam sessions, and to mingle with some seriously disreputable characters.

Also a regular at Cass's place, by some reports, was Charlie Manson himself. According to Ed Sanders, it was at Cass's home that Charlie first met her neighbor, coffee heiress Abigail Folger (*who helped finance Kenneth Anger's films, like the one that was supposed to star Godo Paulekas but instead starred Mansonite Bobby Beausoleil*). According to Terry, the rather notorious group known as The Process: Church of the Final Judgment – which evidence suggests had deep ties to the Manson, Son of Sam, and Cotton Club murders – actively sought to recruit Mama Cass, as well as John Phillips and Terry Melcher.

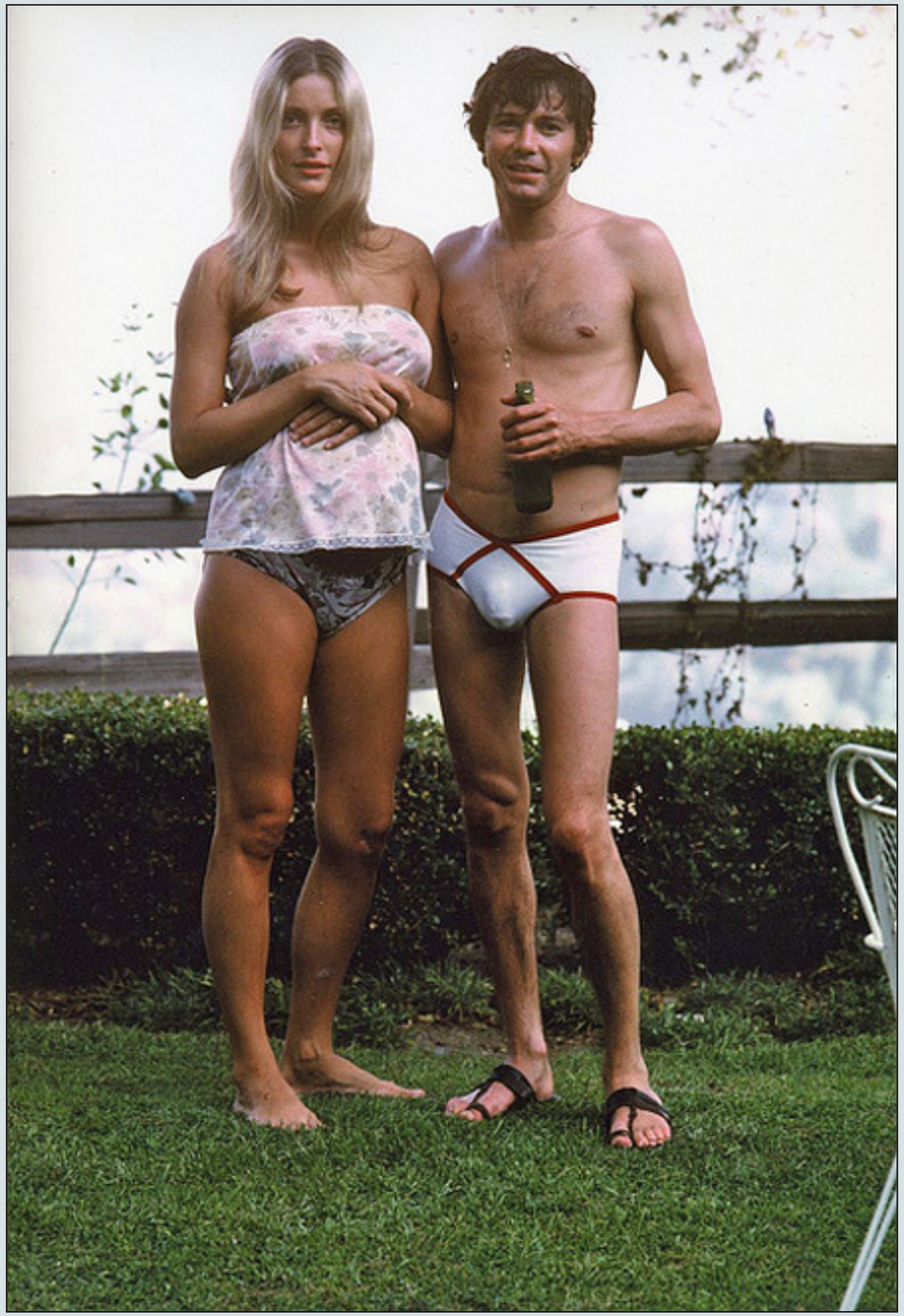
A few further bits of Mansonalia: Terry has written that the Family's iconic bus was seen parked at the home of John and Michelle Phillips in the fall of 1968. Reports also hold that Manson attended a New Year's Eve party at the couple's home on December 31, 1968, just months before the murders. So close were the ties between the Mamas and the Papas and the Manson clan that both John Phillips and Mama Cass were slated to appear as witnesses for the defense at the Family's trial, though not surprisingly, neither was ever called.

For a band that sang about being "*safe and warm, if I was in LA*," the members of the Mamas and the Papas kept some pretty dangerous company in the city of angels … which reminds me that, not long after the band hit the charts, Tamar Hodel received a postcard from Michelle Phillips asking her to watch their scheduled performance on the Ed Sullivan Show and then meet the group at San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel before a scheduled concert. Tamar showed up with father George at her side, the two apparently still maintaining a close relationship, and Tamar, George, John, Michelle, Denny and Cass embarked on a drug-fueled pre-show odyssey.

By 1970, John and Michelle had divorced. Many years later, Michelle would reveal that their time together had included at least one episode of domestic violence, one that she was still reluctant to discuss: "*It was serious. I ended up in the hospital. That's all I'll say about it.*" The union had yielded John a second daughter, Gilliam Chynna Phillips, born February 12, 1968 in Los Angeles.

On January 31, 1972, John Phillips married for the third time, to actress and Crowley aficionado Genevieve Waite; on the wedding guest list were soon-to-be-governor Jerry Brown and soon-to-be-lieutenant-governor Mike Curb. The couple's time together would be marked by wildly out-of-control drug consumption and the birth of two more offspring: Tamerlane, whose name is presumably in part an homage to Tamar Hodel, and Bijou Lilly, who was taken away and placed in foster care in Bolton Landing, New York after her drug-addled parents were deemed unfit to raise her.

In June 1972, shortly after marrying Waite, Phillips moved into a canyon home at 414 St. Pierre Road that had been built by William Randolph Hearst. The Rolling Stones had just vacated the property, and their trusty sidekick, Gram Parsons, would grow very close to John Phillips. Parsons,



Sharon and Jay pose in front of the split rail fence for Voytek Frykowski on the property at 10050 Cielo Drive in early August 1969. All three of them along with Abigail Folger and Steve Parent would be murdered several days later by members of Charles Manson's so called 'family.'

of course, would soon turn up dead, while John would head off to London, where he reportedly planned to record a solo album with assistance from Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. That project never got off the ground, however, as Phillip's addictions rendered him impossible to work with, even for a world-class drug abuser like Richards.

Cass Elliott turned up in London the very next year, but unlike her former bandmate, her trip abroad was to be one-way; on July 29, 1974, she was found dead in occasional Canyonite Harry Nilsson's London flat. Ms Elliott, it seems safe to say, knew a little too much about the dark side of Laurel Canyon.

Following the dissolution of the Mamas and the Papas, Cass had gone on to a successful solo career and had become a familiar face on American television screens. In addition to hosting two prime-time network specials, she had guest-hosted the Tonight Show and had appeared on such popular early-1970s shows as The Red Skelton Show and Love, American Style.

She had been married twice, first in 1963 to vocalist Jim Hendricks in what was reportedly a platonic arrangement aimed at getting Hendricks a draft deferment. During that first marriage, which was annulled in 1968, Cass had given birth to a daughter, Owen Vanessa Elliott, born on April 26, 1967. Hendricks, however, was reportedly not the father and Cass steadfastly refused to reveal who Owen's true father was. In 1971, following the breakup of the band, Cass married again, this time to Baron Donald von Weidenman, a wealthy Bavarian heir. That marriage collapsed after just a few months though and Cass was single when she died just a few years later. Owen, already fatherless, was just seven.

Denny Doherty, meanwhile, went on to host a popular variety show in Canada, as well as performing in various formations of the New Mamas and the Papas. He passed away on January 19, 2007, reportedly due to kidney failure.

Michelle Phillips released an unsuccessful solo album, but then switched gears and went on to a successful acting career, gracing the small screen in such hit shows as Knot's Landing, Hotel, and Beverly Hills, 90210. She continued to have numerous flings and has married several more times. At sixty-seven years old, she is the only living member of the original Mamas and the Papas.

Returning now to John Phillips, in 1975 he sobered up enough to put together the soundtrack for the film "*The Man Who Fell to Earth*", a surreal venture featuring the talents of fledgling actor David Bowie and director Nicholas Roeg, who had previously collaborated with Crowleyite Donald Cammell on the heavily occult-influenced Performance. Roeg's film, curiously enough, includes a cameo appearance by Apollo astronaut Jim Lovell. At that same time, Phillips was working on completing a horrifically bad, Andy Warhol-produced musical entitled Man on the Moon, which closed just two days after opening.

As a side note, Phillips at one time had Don "*Miami Vice*" Johnson in mind to play the lead in his space opera. Like the rest of the Hollywood notables in this story, Johnson was a canyon dweller at the time. His next-door neighbor was a guy by the name of Chuck Wein, an avid occultist and buddy of Warhol who, in addition to managing bizarre nightclub acts, directed the 1972 new age documentary Rainbow Bridge, filmed less than two months before star Jimi Hendrix turned up dead. Wein shared a curious nickname with fellow Canyonite Charlie Manson: '*The Wizard.*' But I may have drifted a little off-topic here …

For the remainder of his career, Phillips' musical output consisted primarily of occasionally writing songs for and with others, his most well known contribution being his co-writing duties on the wretchedly awful Kokomo, recorded by the Beach Boys.

In 1981, Phillips found himself facing charges of trafficking large volumes of narcotics. By his own account, he had an arrangement with a pharmacy that allowed him to obtain large amounts of narcotics without prescriptions (*daughter Bijou would later say that he had actually purchased the pharmacy, guaranteeing virtually unlimited access*). The charges were quite serious; in Phillip's own words, he "*was looking at forty-five years and got thirty days.*" He began serving his sentence, appropriately enough, on April 20, and he was released just three-and-a-half weeks later.

He should have gotten at least ninety days just for Kokomo. It never hurts to have friends in high places.

Phillip's circle of friends, in the post-Mamas and Papas years, included J. Paul Getty, Jr., Bobby Kennedy, Jr., and Princess Margaret. Getty and Kennedy, both plagued by demons of their own, were likely being supplied by Phillips. Another name in Phillips' rolodex was Colin Tennant, the wealthy heir of a massive petrochemical conglomerate in the UK. Tennant owned a private island in the British West Indies where wealthy friends like John Phillips and Mick and Bianca Jagger could engage in unknown activities in complete seclusion.

Kidnappers chopped off the heir to the Getty oil fortune's ear in 1973 and an overdose later left him paralyzed and partially blind after a lengthy coma – J. Paul Getty, Jr.

Upon being released from his preposterously short period of confinement, Phillips put together a version of the Mamas and the Papas that included daughter Mackenzie Phillips and original lead vocalist Denny Doherty. Scott McKenzie, who had summoned all the runaways across the country to come to San Francisco with flowers in their hair, later replaced Doherty. Laurie Beebe subsequently replaced Mackenzie Phillips, after which Doherty returned one again to replace John Phillips. The band finally called it quits in 1994.

Phillips had divorced Waite in 1985. In 1992, he received a liver transplant and a new lease on life. Just months later, he was photographed drinking in a bar in Palm Springs. In 1998, Phillips and the other surviving members of the Mamas and the Papas were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Three years later, on March 18, 2001, Phillips died of heart failure. The saga wasn't quite over, however; Phillips' daughters would carry on with the family tradition – while spilling some dark family secrets along the way.

Oldest daughter Mackenzie began her acting career at the tender age of twelve when she landed a role in what was to be George Lucas' breakthrough film, American Graffiti. Just a few years before, it will be recalled, Lucas had been an unknown cameraman at the Rolling Stones' notorious Altamont concert. During filming of Graffiti in 1972, John Phillips, who I'm sure had lots of important business to attend to and therefore little time to look after his daughter, signed over legal guardianship of Mackenzie to producer Gary Kurtz.

A few years later, in 1975, Mackenzie landed a role on what would quickly become a hit television series, One Day at a Time. During the third season, however, Mackenzie was arrested for public drunkenness and cocaine possession, after which her substance abuse problems continued to spiral out of control, causing frequent problems and considerable tension on the set of her hit show. Providing a template for Charlie Sheen to later follow, she was fired from the production in 1980.

After two nearly fatal overdoses, she was invited back by producers in 1981. The following year though she collapsed on the set and was once again fired. What had once seemed a very promising acting career was over as quickly as it had begun.

From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, she performed intermittently with the reformed Mamas and Papas. In 1992, she reportedly entered a long-term rehab program that she didn't emerge from for nine months. Following that, she kept a low profile for many years. In August 2008, however, she was arrested at LAX for heroin and cocaine possession and on Halloween day 2008, she entered a guilty plea and was once again sent to rehab.

A year later, in September 2009, Mackenzie released her tell-all memoir, High on Arrival, which painted a dark and disturbing picture of her late father. In addition to introducing her to drugs at the age of eleven by injecting her with cocaine, Mackenzie claimed that Papa John had raped her on the eve of her first marriage, and had engaged in an incestuous affair with her that spanned a decade and ended only when she became pregnant and did not know who the father was – a scenario, it should be noted, with remarkable parallels to the ordeal endured by Michelle's surrogate mother, Tamar Hodel.

John Phillips' memoir covering the time period in question makes no mention of the illicit relationship with his daughter. He does claim that Mackenzie was once raped at knifepoint by an unknown assailant. He also notes, shockingly enough, that Mackenzie's "*house in Laurel Canyon was destroyed by fire.*" That, as we all know, hardly ever happens.

The year after dropping her bombshells, Mackenzie appeared on what is arguably the most appalling '*reality*' show to ever hit the airwaves, Celebrity Rehab, in a role far removed from her glory days on a hit primetime show. That same year, sister Chynna Phillips entered rehab as well, though she was seeking relief from, uhmm, '*anxiety*.'

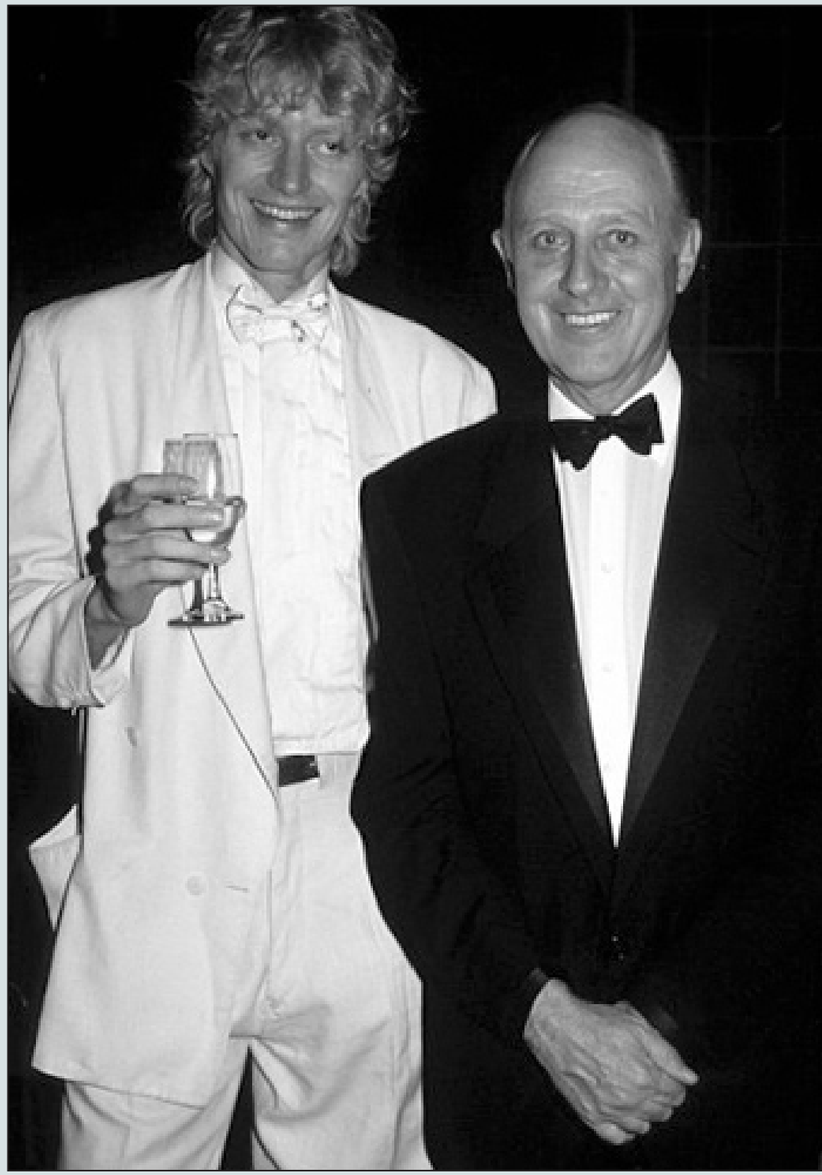
Chynna first captured the spotlight in 1990 as 1/3 of the vocal group Wilson Phillips, alongside of Carnie and Wendy Wilson, offspring of the reclusive Brian Wilson (*the only Beach Boy, by the way, to not be involved with the aforementioned Kokomo, and arguably the only really talented Beach Boy*). That group though proved to be very short-lived, as did Chynna's musical career.

In 1995, Chynna married actor William Baldwin. In 2003, she became what Vanity Faire described as a "*fervent born-again Christian. She was baptized in brother-in-law Stephen Baldwin's bathtub*." The magazine also quoted Chynna as saying that "*being a mom is challenging for me – my perspective is warped*."

Like her older sisters, Bijou Lilly Phillips (at left) – born April 1, 1980, just a year before her father was harshly punished for running a major narcotics trafficking operation – merged into the fast lane at a very young age. Her mother was addicted to heroin while carrying her and Bijou has candidly described herself as a "*crack baby.*" Raised partially in a foster home, she was reunited with her father by the courts when in the third grade. That wasn't necessarily a good thing.

Described by Index magazine as "*a wild child who, through fate and circumstance, was somehow allowed to partake of New York's nebulous nightlife at an age traditionally more suited to playing with dolls*," she was a cover model from a very young age. She was also, perhaps not surprisingly, the fourteen-year-old star of a Calvin Klein ad campaign that many people (*as well as the US Justice Department*) considered to be bordering on child pornography, and that Bijou herself has referred to as "*the kiddy porn ads*."

Bijou told her interviewer from Index that lurking behind the scenes of that notorious Calvin Klein photo shoot – I'm guessing as a technical adviser – "*was this porn guy*." The interviewer identified that "*porn guy*" as Ron Jeremy, probably the world's most famous, and arguably the world's most inexplicable, porn star.



A smartly dressed Lord Glenconner (*Colin Tennant - far right*) stands with his heroin addicted son Henry Tennant at right.

"*What struck both of us was that there were huge gaps in Houdini's life story and some puzzling inconsistencies. So we embarked on a journey to discover the real man. Early on, we discovered an important connection that most biographers seemed to miss*."

– From the Introduction to
The Secret Life of Houdini,
by William Kalush and Larry Sloman, 2006

As noted earlier in this series, there is considerable debate over the question of whether Harry Houdini ever lived in the Laurel Canyon home known locally as the "*Houdini House*" (*the History Channel's Brad Meltzer's Decoded recently aired an episode on Houdini that included a segment filmed at the site, which was unreservedly identified as the former Houdini estate; the series, however, doesn't appear to be overly concerned with accuracy*).

Even if Houdini did live in the home that now lies in ruins, his story would seem to have little relevance here. After all, Harry Houdini, widely considered to be the consummate entertainer of his era, reached the peak of his career long before there was a Laurel Canyon – before there was even that magical place known as Hollywood. What then is there to gain through an examination of the life of Harry Houdini? Quite a bit, as it turns out.

What are generally claimed to be the basic details of Harry Houdini's life can be found in countless published biographies and web posts. Born Erik Weisz in Budapest, Hungary on March 24, 1874, he was the fourth of seven children born to Rabbi Mayer Samuel Weisz and the former Cecelia Steiner. The family later changed the spelling of their names and Houdini became Ehrich Weiss, known by friends and family as "*Ehrie*," which ultimately became "*Harry*." His stage surname was an homage to famed French magician Robert Houdin.

In mid-1878, Rabbi Meyer, with his five sons

and pregnant wife in tow, set sail for America, arriving on July 3, 1878. The family first put down roots in Appleton, Wisconsin before later moving, in 1887, to New York City. Four years later, Houdini launched his career as a magician, at first performing basic card tricks. He had little success and at times would make ends meet by performing in circus freak shows.

In 1893, he met singer/dancer Wilhelmina Beatrice Rahner, known as "*Bess*," who would become both his wife and lifetime stage assistant. The pair though, performing as "*The Houdinis*," continued to find success an elusive goal.

To say that Houdini's fortunes changed in 1899 would be a bit of an understatement. As recounted by Kalush and Sloman, "*Within months, he had gone from cheap beer halls and dime museums to the big-time – vaudeville. In one year's time, he had gone from literally eating rabbits for survival to making what today would equal $45,000 a week.*" After finally hitting it big, however, Houdini then did something rather inexplicable – he abruptly sailed off to England to begin a lengthy European tour.

Kalush and Sloman pose the obvious question: "*Why would someone who had finally made it big risk everything and leave behind lucrative contracts to go to England with no real prospects in sight?*" Why indeed? Such a move in those days would normally be an act of career suicide, but things worked out a little differently for Houdini; everywhere he went – first in England and then in Scotland, Holland, Germany, France and Russia – he was lauded by the press and quickly catapulted into the national limelight.

After a four-year absence, Houdini returned to the U.S. in 1904 and resumed his lucrative career. For many years, he was the highest-paid performer on the vaudeville circuit and he would frequently perform publicly to huge crowds in stunts that were sometimes arranged with corporate sponsors to promote their businesses. In 1912, he introduced what would become his most famed escape act, the Chinese Water Torture Cell.

In 1918, Houdini decided to try his luck with the fledgling new entertainment medium known as motion pictures, starring first in a multi-part serial and then in The Grim Game (*1919*) and Terror Island (*1920*). It was during this time that he is said to have taken up residence in Laurel Canyon, at the corner of Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Lookout Mountain Avenue. Following that, he moved to New York and started up his own production company, the Houdini Picture Corporation, which released The Man From Beyond (*1921*) and Haldane of the Secret Service (*1923*), after which Houdini gave up his less-than-successful film career.

For the last few years leading up to his death on October 31, 1926, Houdini primarily focused on debunking psychics and mediums, leading some to speculate that the spiritualist movement may have been behind his untimely demise. To this day, séances are regularly held around the world in attempts to contact the famed magician and escape artist.

John Wilkie
US Secret Service

And that, in a nutshell, is the Harry Houdini story as it is usually told. But telling stories as they are usually told is a rather boring pursuit, so we are, shockingly enough, going to take a slightly different approach to see if maybe there isn't an entirely different story hidden in the obscure details of Houdini's life, beginning with his sudden rise to fame after wallowing in obscurity for years.

As noted by Kalush and Sloman, "*The young Houdini … couldn't make enough money to succeed at magic. Hungry and crestfallen, he was ready to give up his dream, until he walked into a Chicago police station and met a detective who would change his life. Immediately after this fateful encounter, his picture graced the front page of a Chicago newspaper. That picture catapulted him to renown.*" Within months, Houdini was arguably the most famed entertainer in the country.

That detective was John Wilkie, a major player in the formation of the International Association of Police Chiefs (*founded in Chicago in 1893, at the outset of what has been dubbed the Decade of Regicide, which set the stage for World War I*) and the ominously titled National Bureau of Identification, and ultimately the chief of the U.S. Secret Service, America's premier intelligence operation during that era. It should probably be noted here that one of Houdini's nephews, Louis Kraus, worked for the Treasury Department, overseer of Wilkie's Secret Service.

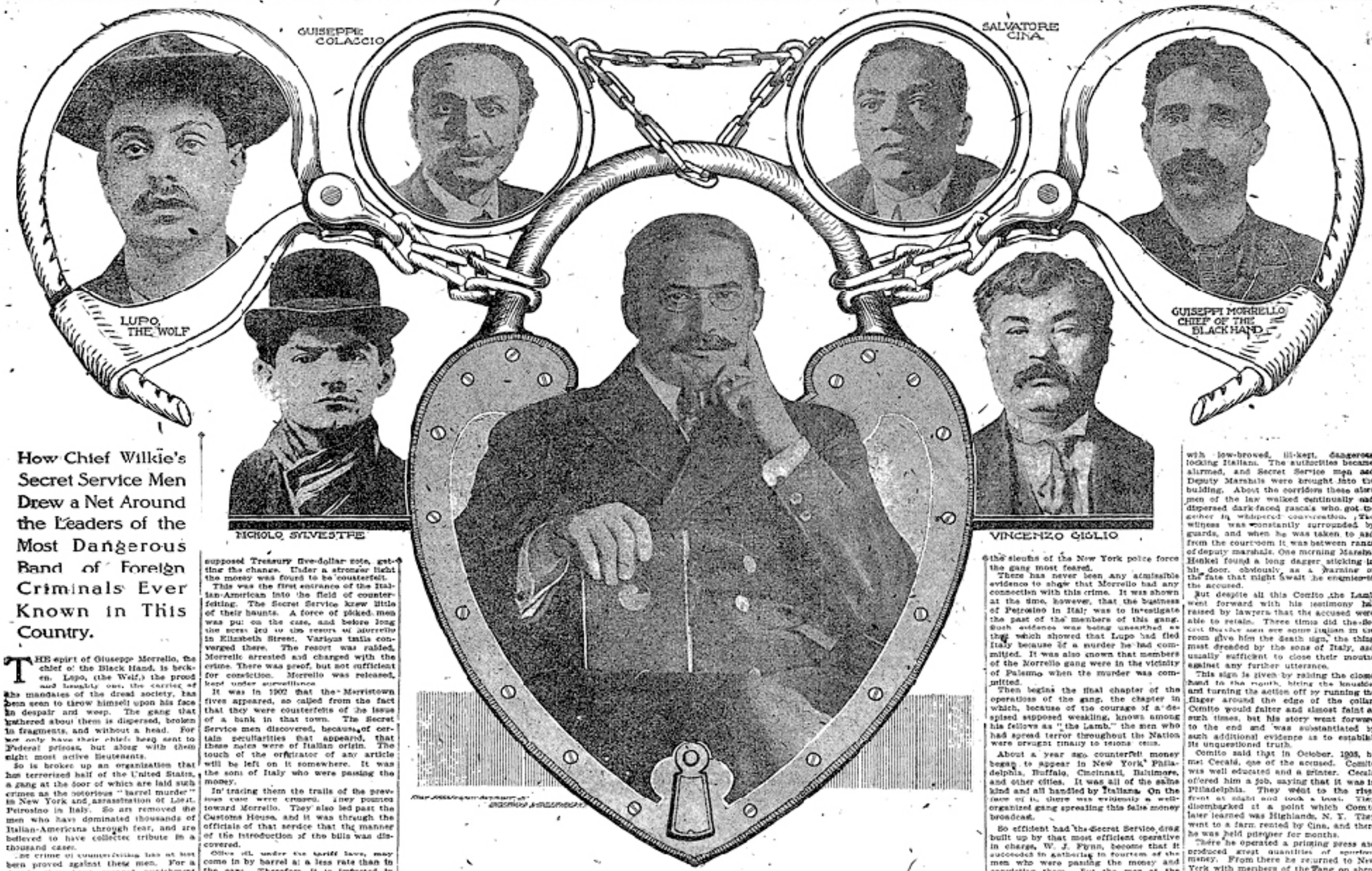
Authors Kalush and Sloman are of the opinion that, "*It was forward-thinking for the chief of America's only intelligence operation to be using entertainers for covert activities in 1898.*" Maybe so, but the authors duly note that such actions were not unprecedented; nearly four decades earlier, Abraham Lincoln had recruited an eighteen-year-old magician named Horatio G. Cooke to serve as a Civil War spy. Lincoln and Cooke were close enough that he was reportedly present at the president's deathbed. Later, near the end of his life, Cooke became a close friend of Harry Houdini.

It could also be noted that an entertainer of a different variety, stage actor John Wilkes Booth, also appears to have served as an intelligence operative during the Civil War, so the practice of utilizing entertainers for covert operations clearly didn't begin with Wilkie, who was himself a magician and a disciple of escape artist R. G. Herrmann. In addition to Houdini, Wilkie recruited other magicians as well, including Herrmann, Louis Leon, and heavyweight prizefighter/magician Bob Fitzsimmons.

Another of Houdini's covert backers was Senator Chauncey Depew, an uncle of magician Ganson Depew and a former mentor to then-Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt (*who would soon be catapulted into the presidency by the assassination of William McKinley, one of the final victims of the Decade of Regicide*). Houdini would soon gain another hidden backer – William Melville, head of Scotland Yard's Special Branch and the most visible law enforcement official in the UK. Melville would ultimately become the first chief of Britain's MI-5.

As Kalush and Sloman discovered, "*Within days of arriving in England, Houdini met with a prominent Scotland Yard inspector and once again, his career took off.*" That inspector, of course, was Melville, whom Houdini secretly met with on June 14, 1900, five days after arriving on England's shores. He had left the U.S. on May 30 using a passport issued just two days earlier – a passport that contained more than its fair share of anomalies.

BLACK HAND MANACLED AT LAST



Chief Wilkie of the Secret Service.

How Chief Wilkie's Secret Service Men Drew a Net Around the Leaders of the Most Dangerous Band of Foreign Criminals Ever Known in This Country.

THE spirit of Giuseppe Morrello, the chief of the Black Hand, is broken. Lupo, (the Wolf,) the proud and haughty one, the carrier of the mandates of the dread society, has been seen to throw himself upon his face in despair and weep. The gang that gathered about them is dispersed, broken in fragments, and without a head. For we only have their chief being sent to Federal prisons, but along with them eight most active lieutenants.

So is broken up an organization that has terrorized half of the United States, a gang at the door of which are laid such crimes as the notorious "barrel murder" in New York and assassination of Lo-it. Petrosino in Italy. So are removed the men who have dominated thousands of Italian-Americans through fear, and are believed to have collected tribute in a thousand cases.

No crime of counterfeiting has at last been proved against these men. For a decade they have escaped punishment largely through intimidating witnesses. But now they are in prison for long terms in every case. So ends a romance of lawlessness which has no few parallels in the history of the nation.

"The Black Hand," said Chief Wilkie of the Secret Service, "was dealt the supposed Treasury five-dollar note, getting the change. Under a strong light the money was found to be counterfeit.

This was the first entrance of the Italian-American into the field of counterfeiting. The Secret Service knew little of their haunts. A force of picked men was put on the case, and before long the trail led to the resort of Morrello in Elizabeth Street. Various trails converged there. The resort was raided, Morrello arrested and charged with the crime. There was proof, but not sufficient for conviction. Morrello was released, kept under surveillance.

It was in 1902 that the Morristown fives appeared, so called from the fact that they were counterfeits of the issue of a bank in that town. The Secret Service men discovered, because of certain peculiarities that appeared, that these notes were of Italian origin. The touch of the originator of any article will be left on it somewhere. It was the sons of Italy who were passing the money.

In tracing them the trails of the previous case were crossed. They pointed toward Morrello. They also led past the Customs House, and it was through the officials of that service that the manner of the introduction of the bills was discovered.

Silks, if under the tariff laws, may come in by barrel at a less rate than in the cans. Therefore, it is imported in bulk, and the Italian cans are brought in empty for its retailing after landing. Their suspicion being aroused by these empty cans, the Secret Service men went at them with their can openers. They found bales of counterfeit money in them. Morrello and some of his associates were known as "the Bull." Lupo also came into the case, having been seen at the Morrello establishment at about the same time. That night Morrello appeared on the streets of the Italian quarter with Pitto the money, gave him a load of buckshot from a sawed-off shotgun. Pitto expired on the spot.

It was at about this stage of his career that Morrello appeared in another of the plans. He had discovered by this time the advantages that attached to the dread name of the Black Hand for extortion purposes. It is believed by the Secret Service men who watched him for the sleuths of the New York police force the gang most feared.

There has never been any admissible evidence to show that Morrello had any connection with this crime. It was shown at the time, however, that the business of Petroleo in Italy was to investigate the past of the members of this gang. Such evidence was being unearthed at that which showed that Lupo had fled Italy because of a murder he had committed. It was also known that members of the Morrello gang were in the vicinity of Palermo when the murder was committed.

Then begins the final chapter of the operations of the gang, the chapter in which, because of the courage of a despised supposed weakling, known among his fellows as "the Lamb," the men who had spread terror throughout the Nation were brought finally to felons' cells.

About a year ago counterfeit money began to appear in New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Baltimore, and other cities. It was all of the same kind and all handled by Italians. On the face of it, there was evidently a well-organized gang spreading this false money broadcast.

So efficient had the Secret Service drag built up by that most efficient operative in charge, W. J. Flynn, become that it succeeded in gathering in fourteen of the men who were passing the money and convicting them. But the men at the head of the plot were still hard to reach. This difficulty lay largely in the fact that so intimidated were all of their countrymen who associated with them that they would go to prison in silence rather than disclose the source of the bad money, for to do so meant death.

with low-browed, ill-kept, dangerous looking Italians. The authorities became alarmed, and Secret Service men and Deputy Marshals were brought into the building. About the corridors these alert men of the law walked continually and dispersed dark-faced rascals who got together in whispered conversation. The witness was constantly surrounded by guards, and when he was taken to and from the courtroom it was between ranks of deputy marshals. One morning Marshal Henkel found a long dagger sticking in his door, obviously as a warning of the fate that might await the enemies of the accused.

But despite all this Comito, the Lamb went forward with his testimony. Harassed by lawyers that the accused were able to retain. Three times did the Secret Service men see some Italian in the room give him the death sign, the thing most dreaded by the sons of Italy, and usually sufficient to close their mouths against any further utterance.

This sign is given by raising the closed hand to the mouth, biting the knuckle, and turning the action off by running the finger around the edge of the collar. Comito would falter and almost faint at such times, but his story went forward to the end and was substantiated by such additional evidence as to establish its unquestioned truth.

Comito said that in October, 1903, he met Cecala, one of the accused. Comito was well educated and a printer. Cecala offered him a job, saying that it was in Philadelphia. They went to the river front at night and took a boat. They disembarked at a point which Comito later learned was Highlands, N. Y. They went to a farm rented by Cina, and there he was held prisoner for months.

There he operated a printing press and produced great quantities of spurious money. From there he returned to New York with members of the gang on shopping tours. Their purchases were verified by many merchants.

Then came Morrello, Lupo, and other members of the gang. Their visits were likewise verified. There the counterfeit money was dealt out and the profits divided. Three thousand five-dollar cir-

The document (*at right*) listed his birthday as April 6, though his actual birthday is said to be March 24. It claimed that he was born in 1874 when there's evidence this isn't accurate. Most curiously of all, the document indicated that Houdini was a native born citizen, though he most assuredly was not. He had been allowed to surrender his previous passport, issued to a naturalized citizen, in exchange for the officially-issued but clearly fraudulent passport that he used to tour Europe.

Given his background as both a magician and a Mason (*by his own account*), it goes without saying that secrecy, deception, and illusion were second-nature to Houdini. He also, as Sloman and Kalush noted, had the unusual "*ability to interact with a country's police officials and do demonstrations inside their jails*," and he was known to be rather proficient at the art of breaking-and-entering. Needless to say, these abilities would have served Houdini well in the world of espionage.

So too would many of the devices he boasted of inventing. According to Kalush and Sloman, "*[Houdini] told the New York Herald that he invented rubber heels and cameras that work only once. The Boston Transcript reported that he invented 'an envelope which cannot be unsealed by steam without bringing to light the word 'opened' and a wash which will remove printer's ink from paper' ... In his own Conjurer's Monthly, he touted the use of chloride of cobalt for sending invisible messages.*"

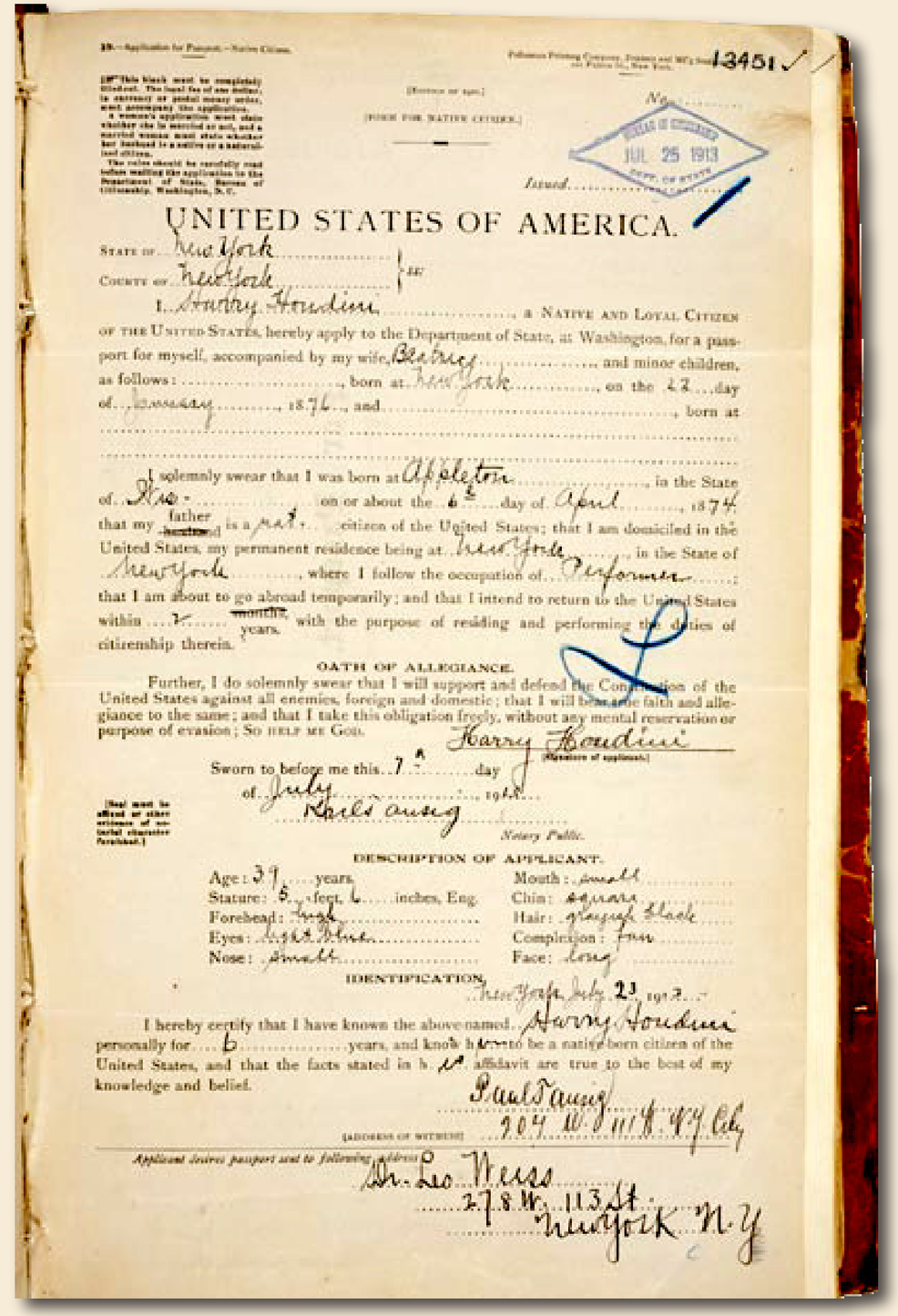
A friend of Houdini's, fellow magician Billy Robinson, was also well-versed in the tradecraft of the intelligence community. In his book Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena, Robinson "*detailed thirty-seven methods for secret writing [which] would play an important part in spy communication during World War I.*" He also "*detailed how to read other people's letters without opening the envelopes by using alcohol to render them temporarily transparent,*" and offered readers "*subtle methods to share information while being closely scrutinized.*"

Kalush and Sloman share what became of Robinson not long after penning the book: "*Then, virtually overnight, he changed his name and appearance, left the country, and broke many of his connections. Years later, his only brother wouldn't even be able to find him.*" Robinson died in 1918 while performing a bullet catch trick that he had performed many times before. Houdini would write that "*it seems as if there were something peculkar [sic] about the whole affair.*"

In addition to possessing skills and knowledge that were ideally suited to the spook trade, Houdini also ran what could best be described as his own personal spy ring. In addition to an unknown number of fulltime confederates (*mostly young women, including one of his nieces*), "*Houdini employed female operatives on an ad hoc basis when he came to town.*" Probably the most important of these operatives was a young fellow magician named Amedeo Vacca, whose relationship with Houdini was unknown to virtually everyone throughout the escape artist's life. So secret was the close relationship between the two that even Harry's wife and brother, magician/confederate Hardeen, were unaware of it.

Houdini was a man for whom secrecy seems to have been something of an obsession. His home was said to be laced with secret passageways and hidden rooms, and his desk contained hidden compartments. There are indications that, while on the road, he would frequently maintain, for unknown purposes, a second hotel room in a different hotel. A man named Edward Saint (*aka Charles David Myers*), who was close to Bess, once claimed that Houdini "*had safes and vaults in his home, and vaults in banks that his lawyers had access to; but one secret, now made public for the first time, is the fact that Houdini had one safety deposit vault in a bank or trust company in the East under some familiar name other than Houdini, and of which the secret location rested only in Houdini's brain. In this vault was kept highly secret papers.*" As far as is known, no one – not even Geraldo Rivera – has located that secret vault.

With his espionage tradecraft and dubious passport in tow, Houdini traveled to Germany in September 1900 after taking the British Isles by storm. As was the case in England and Scotland, the press immediately showered the



13451

(FORM FOR NATIVE CITIZEN.)

No.

BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS JUL 25 1913 DEPT. OF STATE

Issued

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

State of New York
County of New York } ss:

I, Harry Houdini, a Native and Loyal Citizen of the United States, hereby apply to the Department of State, at Washington, for a passport for myself, accompanied by my wife, Beatrice, and minor children, as follows: ....., born at New York, on the 22 day of January, 1874, and ....., born at .....

I solemnly swear that I was born at Appleton, in the State of Wis., on or about the 6th day of April, 1874; that my father was a citizen of the United States; that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at New York, in the State of New York, where I follow the occupation of Performer; that I am about to go abroad temporarily; and that I intend to return to the United States within 2 months years, with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; So help me God.

Harry Houdini
(Signature of applicant.)

Sworn to before me this 7th day of July, 1913.

Paul Aueg
Notary Public.

[Seal must be affixed or other evidence of notarial character furnished.]

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT.

Age: 39 years. Mouth: small
Stature: 5 feet, 6 inches, Eng. Chin: square
Forehead: high Hair: grayish black
Eyes: light blue Complexion: fair
Nose: small Face: long

IDENTIFICATION.

New York, July 23, 1913.

I hereby certify that I have known the above-named Harry Houdini personally for 6 years, and know him to be a native-born citizen of the United States, and that the facts stated in his affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Paul Aueg
704 W. 111th St. N.Y. City
(ADDRESS OF WITNESS)

Applicant desires passport sent to following address:
Dr. Leo Weiss
278 W. 113 St.
New York N.Y.

visiting entertainer with accolades. There was one key difference in the press coverage though: "*The newspaper accounts of Houdini's demonstrations at German police stations portray him as a police consultant rather than a mere entertainer ... For a vaudeville performer, Houdini seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time and have unprecedented access at the Berlin police station*."

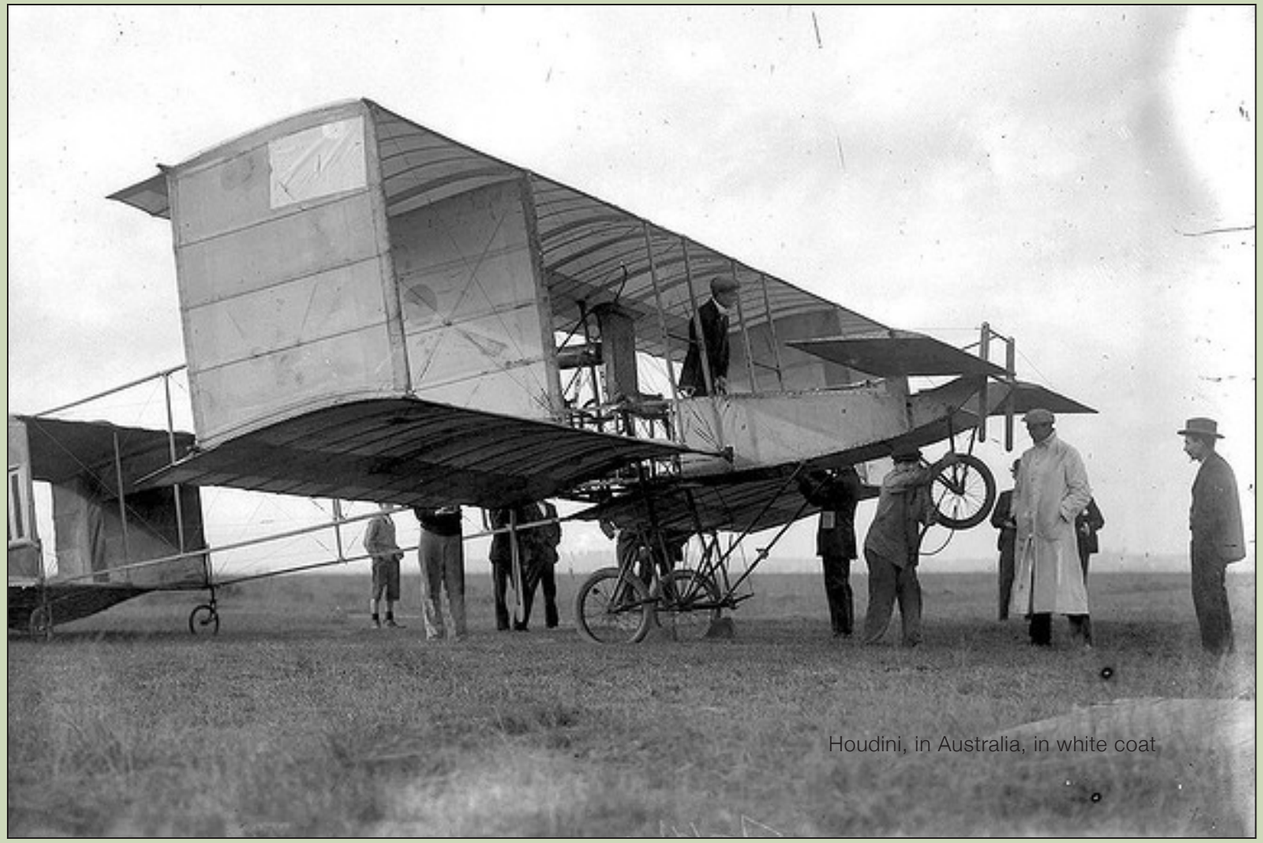
As he had in the US and the British Isles, Houdini established some unusual connections for a stage performer. One associate of his in Germany was a chemist named Hans Goldschmidt, who a few years earlier had patented a incendiary compound known as thermite. "*Houdini noted that he was in Berlin when Goldschmidt performed his first test on a safe. He didn't explain why a stage escape artist would be at such a demonstration*."

After performing to much acclaim in Germany, Houdini continued his pre-World War I tour by visiting France and Russia (*the countries that Houdini visited on this unusual tour – Russia, Germany, France and Britain – had the curious distinction of being the major players in the soon-to-unfold Great War, but I'm sure that's just a bizarre coincidence*).

In Czarist Russia, "*the magician had official permission to appear in any city in Russia, an extraordinary set of circumstances that bespeaks the close relationship between Superintendent Melville and the Okhrana, the imperial Russian secret police*." Houdini's Russian tour was booked by a guy named Harry Day, "*a mysterious expatriate American who changed his name and met Houdini in London around the same time as Houdini's first meeting with Melville ... [Day] eventually became a member of Parliament and did overseas espionage for the British government.*" For many years thereafter, the shadowy Day would handle Houdini's European bookings.

Following the lengthy tour of pre-war Europe, Houdini returned to America with much press fanfare. One of his most high-profile stunts upon his return was escaping from the heavily fortified Cell #2 at the United States Jail in Washington, DC. The cell had famously housed Charles Julius Guiteau, convicted assassin of President James Garfield, prior to Guiteau's hanging at the facility on June 30, 1882. Guiteau, who, like his father, was closely affiliated with a religious cult known as the Oneida Community, shot Garfield on July 2, 1881, after having learned how to use a handgun just a few weeks earlier. He claimed to be acting on orders from God.

The gunshot wounds inflicted by Guiteau were not fatal. Garfield died nearly three months later, on September 19, 1881, from infections resulting from (*probably deliberately*) poor medical care. According to Wikipedia, "*Of the four presidential assassins, Guiteau lived longer than any after his victim's death (nine months*." Given that Lee Harvey Oswald survived JFK by just two days and Leon Czolgosz survived William McKinley by just fifty-three days, this would be a true statement were it not for the fact that there is compelling evidence suggesting that John Wilkes Booth lived for several decades after the death of Abraham Lincoln. And then, of course, there is the question of whether these four men – Booth, Guiteau, Czolgosz and Oswald – were the actual presidential assassins. Houdini, needless to say, succeeded in escaping from Guiteau's former cell – and also rearranged all the prisoners residing on the jail's fabled '*murderer's row*.' To do so, of course, he would have needed a master key,



Houdini, in Australia, in white coat

which someone clearly provided to him. But why? Such were the perks provided an entertainer who appeared to be "*working as an agent for U.S. government agencies, international police associations, and a special branch of Scotland Yard*."

A couple years after his escape from the US Jail, there was a curious incident at the Houdini household. On October 25, 1907, an intruder made a concerted effort to kill the performer, slashing at the sleeping figure more than 100 times with a razor. Harry Houdini, however, was not home at the time. The victim of the attack was his brother Leopold, who closely resembled Harry. Household servant Frank Thomas was arrested and charged with the attack, though there was scant evidence linking him to the crime and no known motive. Indeed, Thomas had arrived the next morning for work seemingly unaware the attack had taken place.

Had Houdini been home at the time, there might have been a different outcome, given that some reports contend that the escape artist carried a handgun at all times. Remarkably, Houdini was able to keep his name out of all press accounts of the crime and trial despite the fact that the attack occurred at his home, he appears to have been the intended victim, and the alleged assailant was his own servant.

On November 26, 1909, Houdini became the first man to successfully fly a powered craft on the Australian continent. He cheerfully dispatched publicity photos featuring him in a plane surrounded by German soldiers – a move he would soon regret when those German soldiers found themselves on the opposite side of the battlefields of World War I. Following America's entry into the war, Houdini would attempt to destroy all photographs documenting his training of German pilots.

The magician's first flight, and all his subsequent Australian flights, were arranged by Lieutenant George Taylor of the Australian Intelligence Corps. Curiously, despite Houdini's avid early interest in aviation, he did not, as far as is known, ever fly again after leaving Australia.

In other news, it appears that, while Lookout Mountain Laboratory has been out of business for many years, the spirit of the clandestine film studio is still very much alive and well, as evidenced by the '*Kony 2012*' video.

On Friday, March 18, 1910, (*above*) with a band of reputable citizens including a couple of journalists, Houdini (*in white coat*) motored out to Diggers Rest, 30 kilometres from Melbourne, fiddled and tested and consulted his mechanic, and then trundled off in his Voisin biplane. As a showman Houdini knew the value of testimonials, so 15 spectators signed a declaration on what they had seen. Stopwatches were used - longest flight was 3 minutes, greatest altitude 100 feet (30 metres) - there were photographs, and he had it filmed. "*She's like a swan. She's a dandy. I can fly now*," Houdini declared in the Herald's report next day.

By the time he arrived in Sydney and made the flight at Rosehill shown, he seemed to have pulled off his mission. Even the Herald said he had "*fully established his claim to be the first successful aviator in Australia*"

"*Why, people even said Dr. Crandon committed illegal operations on little children and murdered them*."

– Mina/Margery Crandon

On April 29, 1911, Houdini debuted his famed Chinese Water Torture Cell escape in Southampton, England, though he had perfected and copyrighted the act well over a year earlier. The inherently dangerous stunt caused quite a sensation: "*Just the sight of the apparatus was enough to give you shivers and make you believe, as one critic noted, that you were about to witness a ritual sacrifice*."

Around that same time, Houdini was, for reasons unknown, busily buying mothballed electric chairs at auctions across the country.

In 1913, Houdini's beloved mother passed away, which apparently resulted in Harry learning some deep family secret. Following her death, Houdini sent the following cryptic note to one of his brothers: "*Time heals all wounds, but a long time will have to pass before it will heal the terrible blow which Mother tried to save me from knowing.*" The meaning of this rather provocative note remains a mystery. Houdini, by the way, was in Denmark when his mother died, and he requested a delay of her funeral to allow himself time to return to the States. Despite strict prohibitions in Jewish law, the entertainer's request was, of course, granted.

In December 1914, just a few months after the staged provocation that allegedly triggered World War I, Houdini was summoned to the nation's capitol for a private audience with then-President Woodrow Wilson. It is anyone's guess what business the two men discussed, but it probably had little to do with stage tricks.

A year-and-a-half later, on that most notorious of dates, April 20, an estimated 100,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C. to watch Houdini perform a straightjacket escape. Other than for a presidential inauguration, it was said to be the largest crowd ever assembled in downtown Washington. One year later, in April 1917, the US declared war on Germany.

For the duration of the United States' involvement in the war, Houdini spent a considerable amount of time aiding the war effort, both through fundraising and by frequently visiting the front lines, where he ostensibly went from camp to camp providing entertainment for the troops.

Houdini's Hollywood career also began just as the US was entering the war. It has often been said that one of his first credits was as a special-effects consultant on the "*Mysteries of Myra*" cliffhanger serial, though others have claimed that Houdini had no involvement in the production. Curiously, the real consultant for the project is said to have been occultist/intelligence asset Aleister Crowley.

Houdini's first feature-length film, The Grim Game, opened to rave reviews. Ensconced in Hollywood, Houdini quickly made friends with mega-stars Charlie Chaplin and Roscoe "*Fatty*" Arbuckle, both of whom would soon be caught

up in scandals – a career-ending one in Arbuckle's case. The fledgling actor next began work on Terror Island, filmed largely on Catalina Island. Unlike his feature debut, Island opened to poor reviews, leading a discouraged Houdini to launch his own production company to create his own starring vehicles.

Just after completing Terror Island, in December 1919, Houdini was involved in yet another curious incident. Having injured his ankle performing the water torture escape, he paid a visit to a doctor who examined the performer and pronounced him in imminent "*danger of death*." Houdini nevertheless lived on for several more years; the doctor, meanwhile, turned up dead within two weeks.

By the end of 1921, the Houdini Picture Corporation had two feature-length films in the can – The Man From Beyond and Haldane of the Secret Service. The first, co-written by Houdini himself and released on April 2, 1922, involved a bizarre plot revolving around a man found frozen in arctic ice and brought back to life, a case of mistaken identity, confinement in a mental institution, escape from that same institution, and an abduction. Haldane, released the following year, was Houdini's first attempt at directing himself. It featured the magician as his real-life alter ego, but its performance at the box office signaled the end of Houdini's film career.

For the rest of his years, Houdini devoted a considerable amount of time to investigating and debunking the spiritualist movement, which flourished in the post-World War I years as legions of fake '*mediums*' preyed upon the grief of those who had lost loved one in the war, promising to reconnect them with those in the '*spirit*' world. By design or otherwise, Houdini's crusade served primarily to publicize the movement. Houdini's interest in the movement was said to have been spawned by the death of his beloved mother.

Houdini had a number of friends in the spiritualist movement, most notably and prominently Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes and possible perpetrator of the infamous Piltdown Hoax of 1912. Both Doyle and Houdini also had connections to Le Roi and Margery Crandon, and that is where this story takes a decidedly dark turn.

Margery, born Mina Stinson in Canada in 1888, had moved with her family to Boston, Massachusetts at a young age. As a teenager, she is said to have been a musical prodigy and to have played various musical instruments in local orchestras, and to later have worked as an actress, secretary and ambulance driver. In 1917, the then-married Mina was hospitalized and operated on by Dr. Le Roi Goddard Crandon, a man who occupied a prestigious position in Boston society.

Crandon was a direct descendent of one of the original twenty-three Mayflower passengers and a member of the Boston Yacht Club. He had graduated from Harvard Medical School and had also obtained a Master's Degree in Philosophy from Harvard, where he also served as an instructor. Just before meeting Mina, he had served as a Naval officer and as head of the surgical staff at a US Naval hospital during WWI.

Shortly after meeting the doctor, Mina divorced her first husband and, in 1918, became the much older Le Roi Crandon's third wife. The two seemed hopelessly mismatched, she being young, vivacious and, by all accounts, very attractive, while he was said to be rather arrogant, unpleasant and antisocial. Nevertheless, the pair quickly became the talk of Boston's high society, particularly after the summer of 1923, when they began holding regular '*séances*' in their home.

One regular member of the couple's inner circle was a fellow by the name of Joseph DeWyckoff, a wealthy steel tycoon who had been born in Poland and educated in England and Czarist Russia before settling in America to practice law. He was ultimately jailed in Boston on embezzlement charges, then later fled to Chicago after embezzling yet more money. He soon turned up in, of all places, Havana, Cuba, where, according to Kalush and Sloman, "*in 1898 he was recruited by John Wilkie, the Secret Service chief, as a co-optee and was involved in spying for the United States during the Spanish-American War*."

That would be, needless to say, the very same John Wilkie who had kick-started Harry Houdini's career that very same year. As a reward for his service, DeWyckoff, who "*had a history of violence, was given the contract to salvage the Battleship Maine in the Havana Harbor.*" The Maine had been sunk in what appears to have been a false-flag operation carried out by US intelligence operatives to justify launching a bloody colonial war.

Although fragmentary, there is clear evidence that Le Roi and Mina Crandon, in conjunction with various others (*including DeWyckoff*), began to '*adopt*,' sometime soon after getting married, an untold number of children who subsequently went missing. A number of letters that Dr. Crandon penned on the subject and dispatched to his buddy Doyle appear to have gone missing as well. As Kalush and Sloman note, "*Strangely, many of the letters regarding the investigation into the boys have been expunged from Crandon's files*." As faithful readers know, there is nothing strange about that at all; it is pretty much par for the course.

In one surviving letter, sent on August 4, 1925, Crandon notes that "*about December first I had Mr. DeWyckoff bring over a boy from a London home for possible adoption … In April 1925, our Secret Service Department at Washington received a letter saying that I had first and last sixteen boys in my house for ostensible adoption, and that they had all disappeared*." Four years earlier, a Boston newspaper had reported that two boys had been rescued from a raft. One, eight-year-old John Crandon, was Margery/Mina's son from her previous marriage. The other was a ten-year-old English '*adoptee*' who was reportedly so unhappy at the Crandon home that he was frantically attempting an escape, with the younger boy in tow (*not unlike the Steven Stayner story*). "*Two years later, when Margery began her mediumship, there was no trace of that boy in the household*."

Perhaps he was the '*homeless*' boy whose dead body was reportedly found on the outskirts of Joseph DeWyckoff's large estate in Ramsey, New Jersey during that time period.

By 1924, Dr. Crandon was openly asking his many friends in the British spiritualist movement to "*be on the lookout for suitable boys to adopt.*" Around that same time, as another associate noted in a letter, Crandon was "*being sued for $40,000 for operating on a woman for cancer, when she was simply pregnant, and destroying the foetus … A highly incredible story which persists is that a boy who was in his family some weeks mysteriously disappeared. He claims that the boy is now in his home in England, but still official letters of inquiry and demand are received from that country. This is no mere rumor, for I was shown some of the original letters … The matter has been going on for more than a year. It is very mysterious*."

In response to questions raised about the disappearance of one particular boy, Margery/Mina complained that "*people wrote asking his whereabouts, and the prime minister of England cabled to ask where he was and demanded a cable reply. Why people even said Dr. Crandon committed illegal operations on little children and murdered them.*" According to Margery, "*the poor little fellow had adenoids and had to be circumcised,*" so Crandon opted to perform the surgery at home. It was widely rumored that the good doctor had performed another procedure at home as well – surgically altering his wife's vaginal opening to allow her to '*magically*' produce various items at séances.

On one occasion, Margery opened a closet in her home and showed an associate a collection of photos of well over a hundred children, "*most of them really lovely*." Margery told the woman that, "*Those are Dr. Crandon's caesareans—aren't they sweet? All caesareans*." Given that Crandon wasn't known for delivering babies at all, the notion that he had delivered over a hundred of them via caesarean was an absurdity. Who then were all these children and what became of them?

Such is the fragmentary evidence trail indicating that an untold number of young boys fell into the nefarious hands of a cabal of wealthy individuals with connections to the intelligence community. Nearly a full century ago. Not to worry though – the disappearances were investigated by John Wilkie's Secret Service and a British MP by the name of, uhmm, Harry Day. And I'm sure they got to the bottom of the sordid affair, just as Louis Freeh is undoubtedly now getting to the truth of the Sandusky case.

Not long before his death, Houdini, who had an extensive library of literature on the occult, began working with horror writer and racist occultist H.P. Lovecraft on various magazine articles. In 1926, he hired Lovecraft (*who could, by the way, trace his lineage to the Massachusetts Bay Colony*) and Clifford Eddy, Jr. (*another occultist and horror writer and one of Houdini's covert operatives*), to co-write a book debunking superstition (*despite the fact that wife Bess was known to harbor numerous superstitions, some of them apparently quite bizarre*).

According to Kalush and Sloman, "*Shortly after meeting with Eddy and Lovecraft, Bess was stricken with a nonspecific form of poisoning*." Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that both Harry and Bess Houdini suffered from some form of poisoning prior to Harry's death. In addition, Houdini is said to have suffered from severe mood swings and to have had some "*aggressive confrontations*" in the weeks leading up to his death, both of which were out of character for the illusionist (*though Bess is widely reported to have suffered from extreme mood swings throughout her life*).

As the story goes, Houdini, who prided himself on being able to take a punch from pretty much anyone, was sucker-punched in his dressing room by a McGill University student, which caused his appendix to burst and ultimately led to his death on October 31, 1926. Houdini's physicians dutifully swore out affidavits certifying the cause of death to be "*traumatic appendicitis*," though the medical community now acknowledges that such a medical condition has never existed. No autopsy was performed.

As previously noted, the house in Laurel Canyon universally known as the '*Houdini House*' burned to the ground exactly thirty-three years later, on October 31, 1959. Precisely fifty-two years (*the magician's age at the time of his death*) after that, the Magic Castle in the Hollywood Hills exploded into flames on October 31, 2011. Built as a Victorian mansion in 1908, the converted structure opened in 1963 as the Magic Castle, a rather creepy members-only club featuring hidden rooms and secret passageways. According to reports, the only room in the building left unscathed by the fire was the Houdini Room.

Cielo Drive as it looks today

The mid-1920s were not a good time for the Houdini/Weiss brothers. Brother Gottfried Weiss, born two years before Harry, died in 1925. Harry followed suit the next year. Brother Nathan Weiss, born four years before Harry, died soon after, in 1927. Shit happens, I guess.

On June 22, 1927, Houdini's European booking agent, Harry Day, reported that his apartment had been ransacked. That day would have also been the Houdini's wedding anniversary – assuming, that is, that Harry was actually legally married to Bess, which may not have been the case. Two months after the break-in at Day's apartment, Theodore '*Hardeen*,' who had inherited all of brother Harry's props, effects and papers, reported that his home had also been broken into while he had been on the road.

Joscelyn Gordon Whitehead, the guy credited with gut-punching Houdini, was a rather curious gent. Though a college student at the time of the incident, he was already in his thirties. His father was a British diplomat serving in the Orient. After Houdini's death, Whitehead is said to have become a recluse living something of a hermetic existence. He did have at least one close associate though – Lady Beatrice Isabel Marler, a wealthy heiress and the wife of Sir Herbert Meredith Marler, a prominent Canadian politician and diplomat who once served as Canada's ambassador to the US.

After Houdini's death, it was widely rumored that Bess – who in addition to suffering from wild mood swings was also an alcoholic and a drug addict who was occasionally suicidal – ran an illegal speakeasy/brothel in conjunction with a woman named Daisy White, who was said to have been Harry's mistress. Nothing weird about that. White was not, by the way, the only woman who claimed or was rumored to have had an affair with the performer.

In mid-1945, Theodore "*Hardeen*," one of Houdini's two surviving brothers and the one who had inherited all of his effects, checked into Doctor's Hospital for a scheduled operation. On June 12, 1945, Hardeen left the hospital in a box. It was reported at the time that Hardeen had been planning to pen a book on his brother and had begun work on the project before checking into the hospital.

Nearly two decades later, on October 6, 1962, Leopold Weiss – Harry's last living sibling and the one who had been brutally attacked in his brother's home – is said to have jumped off a ledge and fallen six stories to his death. The last of Houdini's secrets went to the grave with him.

It has often been noted that Houdini took far longer to perform many of his stage escapes than was actually necessary, and that he was frequently out of view of the audience during such times. This has generally been assumed to have been for dramatic effect. Authors Kalush and Sloman though offer a far more compelling possibility: "*One explanation is that such challenges gave Houdini both the opportunity and an alibi to conduct a mission while he was performing*."

It was, in other words, the perfect cover, for how could a man be responsible for something that occurred elsewhere when he was performing on stage for a captive audience at the time? There are, it should be noted, clear parallels here to the story told by Chuck Barris, who has claimed that he was similarly slipping off to conduct covert missions while performing his duties as a chaperone for the Dating Game.

Of course, no one took Barris seriously because we all know that such things don't really happen in the real world – or at least not in the world that the media present to us as the real world.

It should also be noted here that Houdini possessed, as do most magicians, seemingly superhuman abilities, such as the ability to dislocate his shoulders at will to slip out of straightjackets. He could also regulate his heart rate,

M·J·PRESIDENT·1917·1926
HOUDINI
WEISS
Here
in Eternal Peace
Slumbers
Our Darling Mother
CECELIA WEISS
Née STEINER
Who entered
Her Everlasting Sleep
July 17. 1913
As pure and as sweet
As the day she was born
June 16, 1841
Sacred to the Memory of
Our Dearly Beloved
Husband and Father
Rev. Dr. MAYER SAMUEL
WEISS
Born
Aug. 27, 1829
Died
Oct. 5, 1892
R.I.P

respiration rate and other metabolic functions such that he could survive for extended periods of time with little available oxygen, thus facilitating his escapes.

Such abilities are rather commonplace in the world of magic. One magician was found to be able to identify what card a person was holding by virtue of the fact that he had such extraordinary visual acuity that he could see the reflection of the card in the subject's pupils. Many magicians are able to pick up a stack of cards and know by feel exactly how many cards they are holding, and are able to distinguish individual cards by subtle thickness variations indistinguishable to people with normal abilities.

How do people gain such incredible physical abilities? Probably the best way of understanding such phenomena is as a function of trauma-based, early childhood training.

It appears then that, at the end of the day, the actors populating the Harry Houdini story (*and the Laurel Canyon story*) are the usual cast of characters: intel operatives, Masons, pedophiles, mind-rapists, occultists, and, of course, entertainers. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

I, for one, am pleasantly surprised to see that the hack filmmaker who subjected the world to "*Kony 2012*" is now appearing in some of the most entertaining videos ever to hit the web.

now

You might think the story ends here, but it doesn't. The story you've just read is taken directly from David McGowans web site, "*The Center For An Informed America*", which Mr. McGowan began posting on in about April of 2000. The story you've just read is but a small part of Mr. McGowans collective writings. This story in particular began with his post dated May 8th, 2008 and ending with his last Laurel Canyon post on March 19th, 2012. There are a total of 21 chapters in this eMagazine but there are still, as yet, unfinished chapters. You'll have to check Mr. McGowans web site from time to time to read the final chapters. I hope he posts them.

There are dozens and dozens of essays on a variety of fascinating topics from the NASA Apollo launches to politics and economics. He covers social issues, terrorism, death, taxes and everything imaginable under the sun. Have fun.

http://www.davesweb.cnchost.com/

David McGowan
September 21, 2001

Let me see if I understand this situation correctly: in order to wage a war to promote 'freedom' and 'democracy' around the world, it is necessary to sacrifice those very democratic freedoms here at home.

That makes perfect sense to me, as it apparently does to all the flag-wavers out there who have fallen victim to the relentless war-mongering propaganda being spewed out by our 'independent' media. Some of you, by the way, may want to keep those flags readily accessible in the coming months and years. They will come in very handy to drape over the pine boxes that your sons and daughters will be being shipped home in.

It does seem a bit strange though that the man leading the charge to extend 'democracy' to all corners of the globe didn't actually assume office through anything even remotely resembling a democratic process, but was rather appointed by five men who themselves were appointed to office. I guess that's unimportant though, as none of our politicians or their fully complicit media hacks have bothered to comment on it.

Still it should be noted that while Sir George rants and raves about how Osama bin Laden hates democracy and freedom, it was Bush and his appointers who showed complete contempt for the most basic tenets of democracy just ten short months ago. The Supreme Court decision signed by Rehnquist did state, in no uncertain terms, that: "The individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote for electors for the President of the United States."

So now we are treated to the repellent spectacle of a man who we had no right to vote for even indirectly – according to the interpreters of our Constitution – teaching the world by show-of-force exactly how democracy is practiced. It does seem funny though that none of the supposed 'liberals' in Washington or in the press corps have had a goddamned thing to say about any of that. Not a ripple of dissent on Capitol Hill or from the press corps could be heard in reaction to Bush's absurd statement to Congress and the people Thursday evening that "[The terrorists] hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government."

Of course, it would be difficult to argue with the first part of that statement. It is certainly true that many of the world's people hate the men and women that were in that room, and with good reason. It is not, as Bush indicated, because "They hate our freedoms," but rather because they have been driven to unthinkable levels of hatred by having been denied their own freedoms for decades – thanks in large part to the military interventions designed and implemented by the men in that room.

It is frequently said that those who forget history are condemned to repeat its mistakes. George Bush though has not likely forgotten the history that is now being repeated. It was, after all, his grandfather Prescott Bush and his great-grandfather Herbert Walker who had their assets seized by the Alien Property Custodian under the Trading With The Enemy Act for operating Nazi front companies during World War II. But that didn't stop Bush from declaring, in his Thursday night speech, that: "We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century ... they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism."

Quite a remarkable statement coming from the grandson of one of the men who financed the rise and genocidal reign of those ideologies. Even more remarkable is that he made that statement immediately after declaring that: "We're not deceived by their pretensions to piety." Not surprisingly, his trademark smirk could be detected lurking just beneath the surface of his feigned earnestness.

The script that his forebears helped bring to life many decades ago has now been dusted off and resurrected by the chosen son. All of the elements are already in place: an unelected leader has seized control of the country through 'legal' means, though the legality was predicated solely on the fact that those interpreting the law were fully complicit conspirators; the legislative branch of government has abandoned all pretense of being anything other than a single-party entity, and has bestowed upon the Chief Executive sweeping powers to wage war, both at home and abroad, in any way his administration sees fit; the Office of Homeland Security has been created, although it may as well have been dubbed the Department of the Fatherland; the burning of the symbol of the German ship-of-state, the Reichstag, has been replaced with the burning of the symbols of the American ship-of-state – the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon.

The effect, both then and now, has been to rally unprecedented support for a vacant, demagogic pawn of international corporate fascists. The devolution of America into an overt police state has already begun. War of unthinkable proportions has been declared against a wide swath of humanity. The scapegoating and victimization of a religious minority has already begun, this time with Muslims filling the role previously filled by Jews. A severe economic downturn has begun as well, to further inflame the passions of the American people.

Wake the fuck up, America! Your enemies are not hiding in caves in Afghanistan; they are hiding in plain sight. Your enemies are not the Arab-Americans who walk among you; your enemies look just like you. They do not live half a world away, but are right here in Washington. Their faces can be seen daily populating the cable news shows, right alongside of their craven propagandists in the U.S. media.

Their names are Bush, Daschle, Lott, Clinton, Hastert, Byrd, Cheney, Rehnquist, Scalia, Powell, Rumsfeld, Ashcroft, Gephardt, and all the rest of the human refuse who make up the one-party power structure in Washington. They are assisted in their goals by a cast of shitbag propagandists named Brokaw, Rather, Jennings, Koppel, O'Reilly, Matthews, Russert, and too many others to list here.

These are the people who would rob you of your freedoms and liberties. These are the people who have nothing but the most thinly-veiled contempt for democracy, for civil liberties, for human rights, for racial tolerance, and for the right of self-determination for people everywhere. These are the people who, without so much as a hint of shame, would wage genocidal war around the world while spouting platitudes about 'democracy.'

Bush has pledged that, "We will direct every resource at our command ... every necessary weapon of war." Make no mistake about it, the United States has the capacity and the willingness to kill on an unthinkable level. Before we even resort to our 'tactical' nuclear weapons, which is a near certainty, America has any number of 'unconventional' warfare techniques guaranteed to kill millions, all of which have been used in the past.

There is the low-grade nuclear war that was waged against both Iraq and Yugoslavia by means of depleted uranium shells fired by U.S. tanks and warplanes. The radioactive fallout from such weaponry lasts for decades, and is continuing to claim lives today in the parts of the world where it has been deployed. There is also the 'food warfare' made possible by the development of self-terminating crop seeds by corrupt international seed cartels – technology that could conceivably cause massive levels of starvation. Then of course there is weather warfare, which some researchers claim America has taken to a whole new level with technology such as the HAARP facility in Gakona, Alaska. Then there is the type of environmental warfare that was also deployed against Iraq and Yugoslavia, where chemical facilities were deliberately targeted so as to wage what amounted to indirect chemical warfare. In the Serbian city of Pancevo, and in many other places, environmental catastrophes of previously unseen proportions were deliberately created.

All of these are quiet killers. The media makes no mention of them and their victims go uncounted. The massive environmental damage that has poisoned the food and the water goes unreported. The 100,000+ children who continue to die in Iraq every year remain out of sight of the American people, just as do those who die every time the United States launches a cruise missile or drops a 'smart' bomb. While actively promoting an unprecedented level of national mourning for the victims of the September 11 attacks, our leaders steer attention away from the fact that every time the United States flexes its military muscle, somewhere in the world a nation mourns. And

while the death toll in New York and Washington indeed constitutes a national tragedy, it pales in comparison to the mourning we have caused around the world.

How much more will we cause now? How many bodies will be added to the millions left dead in Vietnam, Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yugoslavia, the Philippines, Guatemala, Haiti, Chile, and elsewhere? And how many of the Americans who were enraged at footage of Palestinians dancing in the streets will cheer and wave their flags when the bombs begin to fall and the body parts begin to fly?

How many will stop to wonder who is actually on the receiving end of the bombs? How many will realize that the scene in New York that so horrified them is being reproduced elsewhere on an unimaginable scale, and that it is civilians, once again, who are being buried in the rubble? And how many will occasionally stop to ponder how the German people could have been led like lambs to support such atrocities?

David McGowan
October 16, 2001

"*There are not many witnesses to say what happened to Khorum village in eastern Afghanistan last Wednesday night; there are not many survivors. One thing is clear. The simple collection of mud huts and livestock pens in this village, around 38 miles from the east Afghanistan town of Jalalabad, was hit by a devastating firestorm*."

– Zeeshan Haider "Stench of Death in a Flattened Village,"
The Guardian, October 15, 2001

(The village referred to throughout this article is variously spelled Khorum, Kadam, Karam, and Koram. It is unclear which is the correct spelling.)

"One week after United States-led forces began bombarding Afghanistan, disturbing evidence is emerging of unacceptably high civilian casualties and ill-defined military and political objectives. Afghans reaching the Pakistani city of Peshawar 60 kilometres from the border said the bombing on Friday of Kadam, a small rural community in Surkh Rud district near the eastern city of Jalalabad, had killed scores, possibly hundreds of civilians." [1]

So said the Sydney Morning Herald on Monday, October 15. This was just one of many reports filed Sunday and Monday concerning the destruction of an Afghan village. The first of these reports were based on the eyewitness accounts of the survivors of the attack, some seriously wounded, who fled into neighboring Pakistan.

A report in the Guardian began: "Serious blunders by American warplanes may have killed at least 100 civilians in Afghanistan, according to eye-witness accounts obtained by the Observer. Two U.S. jets, they said, had bombed a village in eastern Afghanistan, killing more than 100 people." According to one witness cited, the jets circled back twice to unload additional ordnance on the village.

The Guardian also noted that while "Western politicians have been quick to dismiss the claims as propaganda ... apparent confirmation of serious casualties among non-combatants is beginning to emerge. If the evidence is accurate, an attack on Karam village, 18 miles west of Jalalabad, last Thursday was the most lethal blunder yet by Allied forces." [2]

An article in the Independent held that Karam was just one of several villages to be targeted: "Something went terribly wrong at the end of the week. In conversations with refugees, a string of names come up again and again: Darunta, Karam, Torghar, Farmada - insignificant villages where, according to consistent accounts by eyewitnesses, as well as those of the Taliban propaganda machine, hundreds of civilians were killed." [3]

Among the refugees that Independent reporter Richard Parry spoke to, he found that "many have seen at first hand the devastating effects which the attacks have begun to have on civilians. In hospitals, refugee camps and in the homes of friends, they describe how it feels to find yourself directly below one of the most technologically sophisticated bombing campaigns in history."

U.S. officials were quick to deny civilian casualties and denounce the witness accounts as propaganda. Taliban officials countered by allowing Western reporters into the country to view the carnage at Karam first-hand. The journalists, skeptical of what they assumed would be a staged scene, filed reports that revealed their shock and revulsion at what they encountered.

A reporter for The Times described the scene at a nearby hospital: "In a gloomy Jalalabad hospital ward Ahmed Zai clings to his one-year-old son as they lie on a dirty sheet. Both have shrapnel wounds ... Across the crowded ward three-year-old Rahmed cries for his mother. Bandages cover his head, arm and legs. Blood is oozing through ... Doctors tell us that both of his parents are dead ... Along with twenty-five others in this hospital Ahmed and Rahmed were in the village of Koram." [4]

In the village itself, the reporters were met with harrowing scenes of carnage and human suffering. First, however, their Taliban escorts had to subdue the wrathful villagers: "As we approached Koram, climbing a rocky hillside, the villagers erupted in fury, charging down the hill with shovels in hand. We had experienced orchestrated protests during our drive from the Pakistan border, but this was altogether different."

An Associated Press writer made a similar observation: "Waving shovels and sticks, enraged villagers surged toward foreign journalists brought here Sunday by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia to see what officials say was the devastation of a U.S. air attack. 'They are coming to kill us! They are coming for information, to tell the planes where to bomb!' angry and terrified villagers shouted as they charged the reporters." (5)

These were, mind you, ordinary Afghan villagers who - after just one week of terror bombing allegedly aimed at eliminating terrorism and keeping the Western world safe for democracy - were so enraged that they were prepared to violently attack the first Westerners they laid eyes on. I don't know about anyone else, but I'm feeling a whole lot safer already.

Ian Williams of The Times graphically described the village: "One man said that he was burying his wife bit by bit as he dug her out of the rubble. He put a severed leg into a plastic bag and dropped it into the hole that he had dug. The stench of rotten bodies was overwhelming in places. Dead cows and goats littered the hillside, as did chunks of metal, shrapnel from the bombs. Of around 40 stone houses more than half have been completely destroyed."

Kathy Gannon of the Associated Press took in the scene as well: "Villagers pointed out other evidence of an attack: a bloodstained pillowcase by a house, bomb craters and what appeared to be a rotting human limb. Dozens of sheep and goat carcasses were strewn about the mud-hut village, and the air was thick with a rancid stench." [5]

Williams reported seeing "at least thirty fresh graves, villagers praying beside them." Gannon watched as an "old man knelt by one grave, sobbing. He looked up, furiously, at journalists and their cameras and lobbed stones to drive the outsiders away." Witnesses on the scene told the reporters that "more bodies were buried up in the mountains, taken there by residents as they fled the now mostly deserted community."

One villager showed the visitors a piece of bomb shrapnel with English writing on it. His wife and all five of his kids had been killed by the bombs. Another villager demanded answers: "They are innocent people living here. There is no military base. What is it they are looking for in Afghanistan? Where is Osama bin Laden? He is not here. Why did they bomb us?"

Williams ended his report with the following observation: "from the evidence we have seen Koram is no terrorist training camp or military base. There appears to have been a horrible mistake." Not according to the Pentagon and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who put forth the preposterous story that it was an ammunition dump near the village that had been bombed.

As the Guardian reported, Rumsfeld claimed that "US bombs had hit the opening to two nearby tunnels believed to be possible ammunition dumps, causing powerful secondary explosions. People living near the site may have been involved in storing and guarding the ammunition store." The village itself, according to the Pentagon, was not actually bombed at all.

Despite the fact that reporters had seen and photographed bomb craters, and had seen at least one unexploded warhead, the Pentagon "denied there were bomb craters in the village." Left completely unexplained were the bombed-out dwellings, the livestock carcasses strewn about, the abundance of shrapnel, and the scattered body parts.

Rumsfeld washed his hands of the affair with the following shameless lie: "There's no question that people who were in close proximity to these isolated ammunition dumps, who very likely were there for a good reason because they were a part of that activity, may very well have been casualties. They were not cooking cookies inside those tunnels." [6]

No, actually they weren't in any tunnels at all. Some were sleeping. Some had just been called to morning prayer by the village mullah. All were, by any reasonable interpretation of the evidence, civilians.

After reading these reports on Sunday evening - all from British and Australian publications - I decided to catch the 11:00 PM edition of ABC News to see what sort of spin the American media would put on these well-documented reports of civilian casualties. No mention was made of them.

They did though manage to squeeze in an important story about some other tragic victims whose plight had previously been shamefully ignored by all avenues of the media. The following exchange between the talking heads 'teased' the story:

Leslie Sykes: "Still ahead - the forgotten victims of September 11th."
Phillip Palmer: "Tonight, a party to raise money for pets who lost their owners. That is coming up."

I didn't wait up to get the details.

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Celluloid Heroes • Part One

David McGowan
January 20, 2002

"*Radio and television are psychological warfare*."

– Herbert Mullin, falsely accused and convicted Santa Cruz serial killer
and the son of a highly-decorated WWII Army Captain

I couldn't help noticing that Black Hawk Down has now gone into general release. When I first heard about this film, I assumed that it would be a shameless glorification of a reprehensible, imperialist, oil-driven U.S. military operation that was itself shamelessly glorified as a humanitarian mission to feed the hungry.

But I was wrong.

As it turns out, the movie is much more than that. It is also, for instance, a shameless glorification of a convicted child rapist and sodomizer. And, lest we forget, it is one of the most obvious pieces of government-sanctioned, pro-war propaganda to come out of Hollywood since .... you know, I think we may have to go all the way back to Behind Enemy Lines on this one.

But at least that film didn't romanticize the military exploits of a child molester. For the record, the 'hero' of Black Hawk Down, Ranger John Grimes, was given a deceptive name-change by the filmmakers following a request from the Pentagon's PR people. It seems the Ranger's real name was John Stebbins – who is currently serving a 30-year-sentence for an attack on a child under the age of 12. Stebbins' ex-wife told the New York Post: "They are going to make millions off this film in which my ex-husband is portrayed as an All-American hero when the truth is he is not." [1]

He sure looks like one up there on the silver screen though. How could he not be when he is being brought to screen-life by Hollywood hunk Ewan McGregor? Far be it from me to suggest that the larger-than-life hero up there is actually a convicted pedophile. That would be like, say, suggesting that the hero played by Brad Pitt in that wretched movie about Tibet was actually a Nazi seeking 'proof' of Aryan supremacy.

Of course, using the magic of Hollywood to transform repellent cultural and historical figures into screen heroes is standard operating procedure in Tinseltown. It is something that the film industry really excels at. We are talking here, after all, about an industry that recently gave no less an appalling figure than the Marquis de Sade a Hollywood makeover.

But the point that I started to make before getting sidetracked is that the repugnant piece of celluloid known as Black Hawk Down is a painfully transparent piece of propaganda – its release coming precisely at a time when the Bush team is beginning to drop broad hints that Somalia could be very highly-placed on the list of nations about to suffer from Sudden Aerial Bombardment Syndrome – all in the name of fighting terrorism, of course.

Expansion of the war into Somalia could prove to be a tough sell with the American people though. Despite being conditioned and encouraged to have famously short memories, there is always the danger that some of us might remember those graphic images of a Special Forces operative being drug through the streets of Mogadishu. Good thing then for the Washington crowd that this film came along at such an opportune time – and amid a clamor of cravenly gushing reviews.

What better way to sell a war than on the nation's theater screens? According to an article in the Online Journal,

"Many who have seen the film report leaving the theater feeling angry, itching to 'kick some ass.'" [2]

Nothing like some emotionally-charged propaganda to fire up the people for a war of 'revenge' against a nation of people depicted as barbarians.

But wait a minute, you say. This film can't be deliberate propaganda. Production on this movie had to have begun long before September 11, long before there was a 'War on Terrorism.' The timing of the movie must then be just a bizarre and fortuitous coincidence – just like the timing of all the other war and 'spy' films flooding the nation's theaters is just a coincidence.

The release of the aforementioned Behind Enemy Lines, just as real-life Special Forces operatives were being sent behind 'enemy' lines, was surely just a coincidence. Likewise for Spy Games and, so as not to leave out the little ones, Spy Kids. And Collateral Damage (Ahhnuld takes on the terrorists), We Were Soldiers (Mel Gibson helps rewrite the Vietnam War), Hart's War (Bruce Willis helps rewrite WWII), The Farm (aka the CIA's training center in Langley, Virginia), Bad Company (more of the same), Spy Kids 2, The Accidental Spy, I Spy, and the further adventures of fictional 'spies' James Bond and Jack Ryan.

And it is obviously just a coincidence that the television networks are quickly filling timeslots with spies as well, having premiered no less than three new series glorifying and romanticizing the exploits of the CIA just weeks after what was purportedly the most massive intelligence 'failure' in U.S. history.

We know that this was a coincidence because these new series were obviously 'in the can' long before 'the agency,' as CBS refers to it, had any inkling that it would be thrust into the limelight in September as it suddenly earned a much more visible role in formulating U.S. foreign and military policy, and a much larger budget.

As a brief aside, I just realized that I wrote "U.S. foreign and military policy" as though those were two separate and distinct concepts. Sorry. I have no idea what the hell I was thinking.

Anyway, the point here is that we know that the CIA's crack counterterrorism experts had no hint of the impending attacks because if they did they would have heroically risen to the task of saving the lives of the doomed inhabitants of the World Trade Center towers, just like they do every week on TV.

And that, of course, didn't happen.

So it had to be just uncanny timing that brought these new shows to America's television screens at the precise time that the much-maligned CIA was desperately in need of something to burnish its image. And in a not-so-shocking development, the CIA is now openly participating in the crafting of its image for both the big and small screens. This is in stark contrast to the old days, when the intelligence community covertly participated in crafting its image – and the images of just about everything else, for that matter. Like the Hollywood crowd is fond of saying, it is the agents who wield the real power in Tinseltown.

With military and intelligence types overrunning both the big and small screens, some might be tempted to ponder whether there isn't a coordinated psychological warfare campaign being waged against the American people to condition them to support a serious expansion of the 'War on Terrorism.' In retrospect, some skeptics in the crowd might even wonder whether the country hasn't been being primed for a major war for quite some time.

We have been, after all, bombarded with Steven Spielberg's masterful work of flag-waving war-glorification we all know and love as Saving Private Ryan. Some have noted, by the way, that Spielberg's films are structured to resemble nothing so much as Nazi propaganda films of the 1930s. Not unlike, for example, the films of Leni Riefenstahl – the master propagandist for the Reich who gave the world Triumph of the Will. If you aren't familiar with Riefenstahl, you will be soon: she's about to get a Hollywood makeover courtesy of actress/director Jodie Foster.

But that's beside the point ... sort of.

We also had to endure that wretched bit of historical revisionism known as Pearl Harbor, which was made by the very same Jerry Bruckheimer who is now offering us Black Hawk Down. Before Pearl Harbor, he gave us Enemy of the State and a godawful cable television series by the name of Soldier of Fortune, Inc.

One of Bruckheimer's earlier works was the feature-length recruiting film, Top Gun, that was released not long before the 1990s dawned as the decade in which it would become a rather routine practice for America's 'top gun' pilots to bomb the piss out of various defenseless nations that are selfishly hoarding their oil reserves.

In those days, Bruckheimer was working with co-propagandist co-producer Don Simpson – who opted out of the partnership when he was found dead in his home, allegedly the victim of a drug overdose or of natural causes, depending on who is telling the story. Simpson's personal physician and apparent drug supplier had likewise been found dead, in Simpson's poolhouse, and likewise was said to be the victim of a drug overdose. Shit happens.

In Hollywood, shit happens all the time. Since shortly after its emergence circa 1915 as the entertainment capital of the world, Hollywood's streets have been littered with the bodies of those who have died under, shall we say, questionable circumstances.

In September of 1920, Olive Thomas - a beautiful and very young actress with everything to live for - purportedly killed herself by overdosing on, of all things, mercury. One year later, actress Virginia Rappe turned up dead at a party hosted by silent film star Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. In February of the next year, 1922, producer William Desmond Taylor - a former British military officer whose life is shrouded in mystery to this day - was found shot to death.

In 1923, matinee idol Wally Reid was found dead in a padded cell at the mental hospital to which he had been confined. Reid was just thirty years old. His death was attributed to his morphine addiction, though how he would have fed that habit in a mental hospital remains a mystery. His widow then starred in an anti-drug film that she had lobbied for. The film was produced by Thomas Ince – a partner of D.W. Griffith, who gave the Ku Klux Klan a rather notorious Hollywood makeover in Birth of a Nation. Ince caught a bullet to the head in November of 1924 while attending a private party aboard William Randolph Hearst's yacht (though it was claimed that Ince died of natural causes, a story propagated primarily by Hearst's own newspapers).

And so began a tradition of unsolved and/or covered-up deaths that plagues Hollywood to this day. And the funny thing is that if you scratch beneath the surface of virtually any of these untimely deaths, you find the same cast of characters that you find lurking about the fringes of any self-respecting political 'conspiracy theory' – namely Mafioso, native and imported fascists, drug traffickers, and intelligence operatives.

As another brief aside, I just realized that I wrote "Mafioso, native and imported fascists, drug traffickers, and intelligence operatives," which is kind of like saying "Larry, Curly, Moe, and the Three Stooges."

The bodies continue to pile up in Hollywood to this day. Recent additions include: Robert Blake's wife, who acquired some unwanted bullet holes in her head; William Shatner's wife, who ... uhhh ... drowned ("we've got you covered, Captain"); singer Aaliyah, whose plane - flown by a Florida-trained pilot with drug connections - went down because it was reportedly overweight, despite the fact that much of the band's equipment was reportedly left behind ("can we move some of this equipment out of here? - we have to make room for all these drugs"); and comedian Phil Hartman, whose shooting death was covered up with a murder/suicide story that had more holes in

it than an Al Queda tunnel complex.

But here I have digressed at some length.

The point I was trying to make is that a psywar campaign has been in effect for quite some time now to condition the American people for what has been occasionally billed as World War III. The operative strategy has been to romanticize and glorify World War II, creating a kind of perverse wartime nostalgia. Hence we have seen the likes of Pearl Harbor on the big screen, Band of Brothers on the small screen, and literary masterpieces like The Greatest Generation in the bookstores.

And those works of 'art' are just the tip of the psywar iceberg. The media has become so besotted with images of heroic military and law enforcement personnel that the World Socialist Web Site recently felt compelled to commend an otherwise forgettable film simply because: "its protagonists are not generals or admirals, Navy Seals, Green Berets, marine commandos, FBI or CIA agents, state troopers or municipal police officers, sheriffs or deputy sheriffs, prison wardens or guards, secret service or Treasury agents, customs inspectors, immigration investigators, federal marshals, judges, bailiffs, parole or probation officers, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms inspectors, Internal Revenue criminal investigators, Fish and Wildlife Service special agents, or any other fictional representatives of law enforcement."

They seem to have left out federal prosecutors, district attorneys, judge advocate generals, Supreme Court justices, U.S. embassy personnel, White House staffers and .... well, I think you get the idea.

As for the spy trade, there have historically been two primary representations of intelligence operatives in our propaganda entertainment media, both of them grotesquely disinformational and at least one of them crafted by the spooks themselves. That would be the notion of the intelligence operative as a dashing, cultured, romantic hero. The prototype for this version of the fictional spy was largely provided by Ian Fleming, creator of the James Bond character.

Fleming was a British intelligence operative during (and after) World War II, when he worked closely with Nazi 'defector' Rudolph Hess and a rather notorious character named Aleister Crowley – a flamboyant occultist, British and probable U.S. intelligence operative, and avid German and Nazi propagandist during World Wars I and II. Fleming's work is now being carried on by the likes of Tom Clancy, a 'former' Naval Intelligence asset and good friend of George Bush.

The other predominant image of the intelligence community that has permeated the media is that of 'the gang that couldn't shoot straight' – the spy as a well-intentioned, bumbling fool. On the big screen, the Pink Panther films established the model for this archetype, along with such television series as Get Smart, which was co-created by Buck Henry. Henry also was credited with the screenplay for the film Day of the Dolphin – a blatantly disinformational look at the work of MK-ULTRA operative John Lilly.

Assisting Henry on creating Get Smart, by the way, was Mel Brooks, whose most recent endeavor was adapting for the Broadway stage his film The Producers – an offensive piece of work that trivializes the crimes of the Third Reich and casts Herr Hitler as a cartoonish character. Strangely enough, Brooks chose to stage the gala premier of his play on April 20, 2001 – the birthday of its protagonist.

Brooks wasn't the first to present a buffoonish screen image of Hitler. Charlie Chaplin did it far earlier – back in 1940 when The Great Dictator was released just after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The funny thing was though that Charlie pretty much wore the same makeup to play the Fuhrer that he had been wearing for the previous twenty years.

Chaplin's toothbrush-mustachioed 'Little Tramp' character was created and began gracing the nation's silent movie screens just as the similarly adorned Adolf Hitler began his climb to power in Germany's fledgling Nazi Party following World War I (after, it should probably be noted, spending some time in the Pasewalk Sanitarium). By the time the real Hitler stepped onto the world stage, therefore, the American people were predisposed to view the silly-looking character as little more than a joke.

Coincidence? Probably so, but I thought I'd throw it out there anyway – along with the fact that the two men were born just hours apart: Chaplin on April 18, 1889 and Hitler on April 20, 1889. That means that .... actually, I have no idea what the hell that means, but it seems like it should mean something.

Chaplin, by the way, who shared with Ranger Stebbins a well-known appetite for underage girls, was among the elite guests aboard Hearst's yacht the night Ince was killed, may have been present at the party of his friend Fatty Arbuckle that ended in the death of Virginia Rappe, and was the guest of honor at a 1972 party at which Oscar Levant made his last public appearance before being discovered dead.

Though this warning may be a little belated, I would strongly caution everyone out there against attending any parties where Chaplin is on the guest list.

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Celluloid Heroes • Part Two
or: The Tangled Web of Charlie Manson

David McGowan
February 10, 2002

"*[In Hollywood], everyone's a producer or a hit man*."

– Douglas Clark, convicted Sunset Strip serial killer and the son of a Naval Intelligence operative

"*I don't know if you guys have ever in your entire life shot anybody, but it's really fun to do*."

– Former child actor Carol Bundy, Clark's convicted accomplice, speaking to the police

It has frequently been said that if you scratch just beneath the glossy and oh-so-glamorous exterior of the Hollywood dream factory, you will find the dark and ugly reality that lurks just beneath the surface. But just how dark and ugly is that reality?

There is certainly no shortage of recurrent weirdness that passes for business-as-usual in the land of make-believe that we like to call Hollywood. For such a small and tight-knit community, the Hollywood gang has generated more than its fair share of scandal and sleaze over the better part of the last century.

Is that merely because, in our celebrity-obsessed culture, every misstep of the entertainment community is open to such intense scrutiny? Would we find the same skeletons in the closets of any other group in the country that was subjected to such unabashed media and public voyeurism? Is Hollywood merely a microcosm of America itself, illuminated by the harsh glare of the stage lights?

If so, then it is truly a strange and scary world that we live in. Consider, if you will, just a few recent examples of Tinseltown weirdness:

• Actress Margot Kidder, missing for a week, surfaces in the bushes of a stranger's yard with her head shaved and a few of her teeth conspicuously absent.
• Actress Anne Heche similarly goes missing, only to show up at the door of a stranger in the middle of nowhere babbling about being beamed up to the mothership.
• Actor/comedian Martin Lawrence decides to stop traffic one day on busy Ventura Boulevard by wandering into the street, waving a gun and shouting incoherently.
• Actor Robert Downey, Jr. finds himself sleeping in the bed of a neighbor, with no idea of how he got there.
• Dr. Haing S. Ngor, who purportedly survived the killing fields of Cambodia before starring in Hollywood's version of events there, doesn't survive the streets of Hollywood; he is gunned down in February of 1996.
• Actor Jack Nicholson decides to blow off some steam by attacking the vehicle of another motorist with a golf club.
• Someone 'falls' to their death from the apartment of actor James Caan.
• Comic actor Eddie Murphy is arrested in the company of a transsexual prostitute. He/she dies a violent death shortly afterwards, though the press doesn't pay much attention.
• Actor Hugh Grant is arrested while being serviced by Hollywood prostitute "Divine" Brown. Brown's pimp subsequently surfaces in the company of a neo-Nazi singer who claims he was offered money by Courtney Love to kill Kurt Cobain. The would-be assassin turns up dead soon after telling this story to filmmaker Nick Broomfield.
• Actor Brian Keith, the former star of television's Family Affair, is found with a fatal bullet wound in his head on June 24, 1997. His death, ruled a suicide, continues a long tradition of Hollywood notables allegedly shooting themselves in the head.

Included on that list are Herve "Tatoo" Villechaize (September 4, 1993), Del Shannon (December 8, 1990), Jon-Erik Hexum (October 12, 1984), Freddie "Chico" Prinze (January 29, 1977), Pete Duel (December 31, 1971), and George "Superman" Reeve (July 1, 1959).

• On June 2, 1996, the 35th anniversary of her grandfather Ernest's alleged suicide, Margaux Hemingway joins the list of Hollywood personalities whose deaths are attributed to drug overdoses. Margaux is the fifth member of her family to have their deaths ruled as suicides. River Phoenix's death on Halloween, 1993, outside of Johnny Depp's Viper Room, is also attributed to an overdose.

Nothing unusual about any of that, I suppose. Looking further back over the sordid history of Hollywood, consider also these examples of unexplained weirdness (and these examples are, it should be noted, just the tip of a very large iceberg):

• At Marlon Brando's Los Angeles estate, his son Christian shoots and kills sister Cheyenne's significant other, Dag Drollet, in May of 1990. Christian and his father claim that the shot was fired accidentally during a struggle for the gun. There is no sign of a struggle, and Drollet is found in a sitting position with a cigarette lighter and the remote control for the TV still in his hands. Attorney Robert Shapiro, who also represented Robert Evans in the Cotton Club murder case, cops a plea that results in Brando serving just five years. By that time, Cheyenne is dead, allegedly a suicide victim. Christian is later considered as a husband by Bonnie Lee Bakley, before she decides to marry Robert Blake. Five months later, Bakley is dead.
• Actors and actresses like Clara "It Girl" Bow, Frances Farmer, and the aforementioned Oscar Levant and Wallace Reid find themselves forcibly confined to mental hospitals. Farmer later tells of being beaten, raped, locked in a cage, and administered electroshock torture (oops ... I meant to say electroshock therapy).
• Mob enforcer Johnny Stompanato is found stabbed to death in the home of actress Lana Turner. Turner's young daughter takes the rap, though she doesn't appear to be physically capable of committing the crime.
• Actress Natalie Wood goes missing in the middle of the night from a yacht while in the company of actors Robert Wagner and Christopher Walken. She subsequently is found floating in the Pacific Ocean. Witnesses later claim that she had been in a motel room with Walken on Catalina Island.
• Aspiring actress Elizabeth "The Black Dahlia" Short is found literally cut in half, with her mutilated remains left on display, on January 15, 1947.
• People close to actress Sarah Miles develop a knack for committing suicide. There is the roommate who jumps out of the window of their shared apartment. There is the ex-gardener who owes Miles money and decides to gas himself. And of course there is the business manager who is discovered dead in Sarah's motel room and declared to be the victim of a drug overdose – though there is reportedly blood on his face and on the bed in which he is found. Miles has purportedly spent the night in the room of her co-star at the time: Burt Reynolds.
• Actress Thelma "Hot Toddy" Todd turns up dead in her car, allegedly the victim of suicide by means of carbon monoxide poisoning. Blood on her face, a cut lip and a dislodged tooth indicate that she was beaten senseless prior to her .... uhhh .... suicide. Todd had at one time been the wife of Pat DiCicco, one of "Lucky" Luciano's top lieutenants.
• Three years after Todd's death, popular comedian Ted Healy - who had had a fling with Thelma - is beaten to death. Though the details of his death were never reported, it has been fairly common knowledge in Hollywood circles for decades that Healy was beaten by DiCicco and actor Wallace Beery. Present at the time of the beating is Albert "Cubby" Broccoli – first cousin of DiCicco, friend of Howard Hughes, and one-time agent for Lana Turner. Broccoli goes on to produce the James Bond films, penned by British intelligence asset Ian Fleming. Assisting in covering up the murder of Healy is Shemp Howard of the Three Stooges, whose careers were launched by Healy.
• Comedian/actor John Belushi is found dead in his room in a West Hollywood hotel in March of 1982. He is said to be yet another victim of a drug overdose. His last known visitors, on the night of his death, are Robert DeNiro and Robin Williams. The story of his death, and tragically short life, is then told in a book by former Office of Naval Intelligence 'briefer' Bob Woodward.
• A number of the people involved with the movie Rebel Without a Cause die mysterious deaths at young ages – including stars James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo (who is stabbed to death outside of his apartment on November 12, 1976) and Nick Reid (who is found dead of mysterious causes on February 7, 1968).
• Silent film legend Ramon Navarro is found dead in his home on Halloween day, 1968. He has been brutally tortured and murdered in what appears for all the world to be a ritual homicide. Two brothers, both young male prostitutes, are charged with the crime.
• Actor Bob Crane is murdered and it subsequently emerges that he had a secret life that centered around a passion for hardcore, homemade porno films.

Nothing unusual about any of that either, I suppose. But consider the web spun by the man known as Charles Milles Manson. Now this is where we really cut to the core of the dark underbelly of Hollywood. Join me then, if you will, as we embark on a journey that I like to call "Seven Degrees of Charlie Manson."

Before doing so, allow me to introduce a few members of the stellar cast of this strange and twisted tale:

• Sharon Tate - the most famous of the Manson victims, and the daughter of Colonel Paul Tate, U.S. Army Intelligence. Tate was killed on August 9, 1969, along with Abigail Folger, Steven Parent, Jay Sebring, and Voytek Frykowski.
• Kenneth Anger - former child-star turned underground filmmaker, and the son of a 'military-industrial complex' engineer who developed machine-guns for Kellogg during WWII and later worked for Douglas Aircraft.
• Judy Garland - child actor and singer who was kept drugged on a daily basis from about the age of five, first by her mother, and then by the studios. Garland was found dead on the summer solstice of 1969, just seven weeks before the Tate/LaBianca murders.
• John Phillips - musician/composer who founded the singing group The Mamas and The Papas and who was born in a military hospital, the son of a career Marine officer. John later attended the U.S. Naval Academy.

• Roy Radin - theatrical producer who specialized in staging vaudeville revival shows. Radin was working with Robert Evans to produce The Cotton Club when he was shot some twenty-seven times in the head in 1983. Radin began his career while still a teenager by staging shows in Masonic temples.
• The Hell's Angels - the most well-known of the biker gangs that arose after WWII due to the efforts of returning OSS and military officers. The Angels were led by Ralph "Sonny" Barger, reportedly an informant for the Oakland Police Department who was also on the payroll of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.
• Jayne Mansfield - actress/sex symbol who was decapitated, allegedly in a car accident, on June 29, 1967. According to Jayne's daughter, Mansfield's parties featured the rich and famous getting naked and filming themselves. Tate and husband Roman Polanski were reportedly the producers and collectors of 'fame porn' as well.
• Robert F. Kennedy - U.S. Senator and presidential candidate who was assassinated in Hollywood on June 5, 1968. Kennedy was allegedly shot from point-blank range behind his right ear by Sirhan Sirhan, who was standing several yards in front of and to the left of the candidate. Like I said, shit happens.

Without further ado, we begin this journey - for no particular reason - with the aforementioned Phil Hartman, who was a highschool friend of Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, who later became a disciple of Charlie Manson, a jailhouse correspondent of John Hinckley, and the attempted assassin of President Gerald Ford, who was once a roommate of modeling entrepreneur Harry Conover, whose wife was the infamous Candy Jones, who was 'treated' by CIA-linked hypnotist William Jennings Bryan, who also 'treated' the purported Boston Strangler, Albert DeSalvo, whose name was written repetitively throughout the diaries of Sirhan Sirhan, who was also 'treated' by Bryan, who served as the technical director on The Manchurian Candidate, which was directed by John Frankenheimer, at whose beach house a dinner was held on June 5, 1968 whose attendees included "Mama" Cass Elliot, Roman Polanski, and Sharon Tate, who was killed just over a year later by followers of Charlie Manson, whose music was recorded by Doris Day's son, music producer Terry Melcher, who lived with girlfriend Candace Bergen at 10050 Cielo Drive the year before it became a slaughterhouse after being rented by Polanski, who initially was slated to pen the screenplay for Day of the Dolphin, which purported to tell the story of Dr. John Lilly, who was a friend of Timothy Leary, whose Mellon family-owned Millbrook estate was frequently visited by Dr. Max "Feelgood" Jacobson, who once 'treated' Judy Garland and who served as the personal physician of John Kennedy, whose assassination prompted the shelving of the film The Manchurian Candidate by its star, Frank Sinatra, who was a frequent companion of fellow 'Brat Packer' Sammy Davis, Jr., who was an acknowledged member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, from where Manson recruited killers Bobby "Cupid" Beausoleil and Susan "Sexy Sadie" Atkins, who confessed to her cellmates that she had stabbed to death actress Sharon Tate, who was inducted into witchcraft on the set of the Polanski-directed film The Fearless Vampire Killers by Alexander "King of the Witches" Saunders, who received 'training' as a child from Aleister Crowley, whose followers included Anton LaVey and fellow Church of Satan member Kenneth Anger, who was the roommate (and probable lover) of Family member Bobby Beausoleil, who once appeared in an underground film titled Mondo Hollywood, which also featured hairdresser and Manson victim Jay Sebring, who was a former lover of Sharon Tate, who was a friend of a wealthy widow named Charlene Caffritz, who played host to - and filmed the exploits of - Charlie and some of his girls, who also lived for a time with Beach Boy Dennis Wilson, who recorded a song penned by Charlie, who was an occasional member of the entourage of Mama Cass, who was listed as a defense witness for Charlie's trial (but never called), as was her Mamas and the Papas band-mate John Phillips, who was close to Polanski, Tate, Melcher, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Cass Elliot, and film producer Robert Evans, who was working with - and very likely contracted the execution killing of - Roy Radin, whose assistant was Michael DeVinko aka Mickie DeVinko aka Mickie Deans, who married - just a few months before her untimely death - Wizard of Oz star Judy Garland, who as a teen was flooded with phone messages and telegrams by admirer Oscar Levant, whose dead body was found by Candace Bergen, who - as a photojournalist for Life magazine - covered the preempted presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy, who was romantically linked to Marilyn Monroe, who was also linked to Anton LaVey, who appeared in Kenneth Anger's Invocation of My Demon Brother (released in August of 1969) along with Bobby Beausoleil, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, who was a guest at the 1968 London wedding of Sharon Tate to Roman Polanski, who - during a nude photo shoot - molested a thirteen-year-old girl at the home of Jack Nicholson, who was a friend of Cass Elliot, as were Robert Evans and Manson victims Jay Sebring, Voytek Frykowski and Abigail Folger, who provided funding for the Himalayan Academy, which Kenneth Anger helped form with Timothy Leary, who was at the side of the stage at the 1969 Altamont concert where - while the Rolling Stones played the Process Church-inspired Sympathy for the Devil* - a fan was killed on film by the Hell's Angels, who had been romanticized and transformed into anti-establishment heroes in the film Scorpio Rising by Kenneth Anger and the book Hell's Angels by Hunter S. Thompson, both of whom have been accused of making snuff films** for private collectors, which was also a favorite pastime of Charlie Manson, one of whose underage recruits was Didi Lansbury, who had written permission to travel with Charlie from her mother, Angela Lansbury, who starred as the control agent in The Manchurian Candidate, which was based on the novel of the same name by Richard Condon, who once served as a publicist for Walt Disney, who once owned the home where the Manson Family slaughtered Leno LaBianca and wife Rosemary, who was involved in the trafficking of drugs, as were many of those in this twisted saga, including Charles Manson, victims Voytek Frykowski and Abigail Folger, John Phillips and Kenneth Anger, who was a huge fan of the dark and violent imagery of the Rosicrucian-inspired, L. Frank Baum-penned Oz books, which inspired the band The Magick Powerhouse of Oz, which was led by Bobby Beausoleil, who was also at one time in the band Love with Arthur Lee, four of whose members later turned up dead or missing and presumed dead, as did Charlene Caffritz, Cass Elliot (who allegedly choked on a sandwich in 1974), Dennis Wilson (who allegedly drowned on December 28, 1983), and Gram Parsons, whose corpse was stolen and burned at Joshua Tree on the autumnal equinox of 1973 by his band's road manager, Phil Kaufman, who was a good friend from prison of Charlie Manson, who met (at Cass Elliot's house) and received money from victim Abigail Folger, who also funded Kenneth Anger, who at various times lived with both Jimmy Page (who purchased Crowley's home and many of his artifacts) and Keith Richards & Anita Pallenberg, whose home - in 1979 - yielded the body of a teenager who had been shot to death, as was John Lennon the next year by Mark David Chapman, who shortly before doing so met with - and offered a gift of live bullets to - Kenneth Anger, whose films were cited as a major influence by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, who was implicated by witnesses in the Halloween 1981 execution killing of New York photographer Ronald Sisman (a close associate of Roy Radin), who was reportedly in possession of a snuff film of one of the Son of Sam murders, which were allegedly committed by David Berkowitz, who from prison accurately described the Sisman killing before it happened and who took the fall for the Son of Sam murders to cover up the involvement of others, including possibly Roy Radin and wealthy art dealer Andrew Crispo, who admitted being present at the site of a ritual murder which was committed by a man named Bernard LeGeros, who was the son of a State Department official, as was Pic Dawson, who was a regular member of the entourage of Cass Elliot, as was a one-time bodyguard of publisher Larry Flynt named Bill Mentzer, who was convicted of killing Radin and who was suspected of involvement in numerous other contract murders, including some of those attributed to David Berkowitz, who was 'examined' by psychiatrist/hypnotist Daniel Schwartz, as was Mark David Chapman, who was obsessed with the film The Wizard of Oz and the book The Catcher in the Rye, which was written by reclusive author J.D. Salinger, who served in the OSS with Henry Kissinger, who was a close adviser to Gerald Ford, who once met and shook hands with Mark David Chapman, who was 'examined' by psychiatrist/hypnotist Bernard Diamond, who also 'examined' Sirhan Sirhan, who had connections to the Process Church, as did many of those ensnared in this sordid web, including Kenneth Anger, John Phillips, Roy Radin, David Berkowitz and Charlie Manson, who attended a New Year's Eve party at the home of John Phillips, who wrote the siren song of the 'Summer of Love,' bringing thousands of hippies and flower children streaming into San Francisco and into the hands of such figures as Louis "Dr. Jolly" West, Anton LaVey, Charlie Manson, Bobby Beausoleil, Timothy Leary and Kenneth Anger, who - just three days after the suspicious death of Rolling Stone Brian Jones - filmed the Hell's Angels stomping the crowd at a 1969 Stones concert in London, just five months before they did the very same thing to the crowd at Altamont, which was organized by San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli, who consulted with F. Lee Bailey whilst the latter was busily railroading Albert DeSalvo and later consulted with Richard "The Night Stalker" Ramirez, who was offered an honorary membership in the Church of Satan by Anton LaVey's daughter Zeena, who along with boyfriend Nickolas Schreck staged an event on 8-8-88 celebrating the slaughter of the victims of the Manson Family, who some researchers believe were involved in the murders attributed to the "Zodiac," who called and sent correspondence to Melvin Belli, whose clients included the widow of Hermann Goering and Jack Ruby, who assassinated Lee Harvey Oswald, the purported assassin of John Kennedy, whose

brother Robert was romantically linked to Jayne Mansfield, as was Anton LaVey, who served as Roman Polanski's technical director on the 1968 film Rosemary's Baby, which was set in New York's Dakota Apartments, where John Lennon was gunned down by Mark David Chapman, who shared a fixation on The Catcher in the Rye with failed assassin John Hinckley, Jr., who stalked actress Jodie Foster, who is working on a film biography of Leni Riefenstahl, who was met by - and admired by - fellow filmmaker Kenneth Anger, who laced his film Scorpio Rising with Nazi imagery, including the prominent use of swastikas, not unlike the one carved into the forehead of Charlie Manson, who - at the Cielo Drive home of Polanski and Tate - had a chance meeting with Nancy Sinatra, the daughter of Frank Sinatra, who was married to actress Mia Farrow, who starred in the Polanski-directed Rosemary's Baby, which was produced by Robert Evans, a friend of Henry Kissinger, who was the righthand man of President Richard Nixon, whose election was ensured by the assassination of Robert Kennedy by Sirhan Sirhan, who was yet another client of Melvin Belli, as were the Hell's Angels and Nazi-collaborator Errol Flynn, who made two films with Ronald Reagan, who was an occasional visitor to the childhood home of Candace Bergen, who - as a photojournalist - chronicled the short-lived administration of Gerald Ford, who married one of his friend Harry Conover's 'Covergirls,' who later opened the Betty Ford Center, where various celebrities in and out of this web routinely check in for tune-ups.

I could probably go on, but I really have to get back to work on my screenplay. I'm thinking of trying to break into Hollywood. I have this great script about a guy who is propelled to the heights of power through a combination of fraud, arrogance, legal manipulation and public denial to lead an imperialist military power that masterfully uses propaganda to turn reality on its head.

When the man-who-would-be-king first takes office, the public views him with a considerable amount of well-deserved skepticism. But then there is an apparent attack upon the state which is used as a pretext to rally the support of the people behind a reactionary social agenda and a war of unspecified duration with unspecified goals. Some suspect that the attack was actually an inside job, but they are ridiculed by those who scoff at the notion that their government would attack one of its own institutions.

Meanwhile, the anti-hero sells the country out to huge corporate and financial interests and institutes overt police state measures to keep the masses in line should the people ever begin to catch on that their collective reality is little more than a grand illusion. Much later, historians reluctantly admit that the purported attack was in fact a staged provocation, but by then it is too late.

I'm almost done with the final draft. I just have to decide whether to name my anti-hero Adolf or George. Then I'm going to have my people get in touch with Jerry Bruckheimer's people and close the deal.

Of course, I might have to take out some of the plot elements and replace them with gratuitous, but really cool, special effects sequences. But it will still be a great movie. Maybe even as good as the biography of the Marquis de Sade that Kenneth Anger had long planned to film, in the original castle where deSade's crimes were committed. But that's another story altogether.

* A number of journalists have written that the killing took place later in the concert. This is perhaps due, at least in part, to the deceptive way in which the film of the event, Gimme Shelter (arguably the most widely viewed snuff film ever created), was edited. In the film, the killing is deliberately shown out of sequence, making it appear as though it occurred at the end of the concert. It did in fact occur while the Stones played Sympathy for the Devil, as can be discerned from a careful viewing of the final minutes of the video version of the film. The band, fully aware of what was going on immediately in front of the stage, played on.

** Thompson, whose legal representation is provided by the same politically-connected law firm that successfully shielded John and Patsy Ramsey from prosecution, has been accused by the child witnesses in the case dubbed the 'Franklin Cover-Up.' Anger was suspected by police investigators, but was shielded from prosecution by sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, a devoted follower of Aleister Crowley. Kinsey died shortly after he and Anger visited Crowley's Thelema Abbey in Sicily.

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American Heroes?

David McGowan
March 4, 2002

"*We never will look at police officers and rescue personnel the same way ...*
Such men and women help define the word 'hero' in America."

So said America's national newspaper, USA Today, in the aftermath of the events of September 11.

Now maybe I'm all alone here, but I'm still looking at police officers in much the same way that I was before. Which is to say that, somehow, I'm having a real hard time viewing the troops of the New York City Police Department as heroes.

This is, after all, the very same NYPD that was, prior to September 11, best known for employing anal rape with a toilet plunger as an interrogation technique, and for sending out a civilian-clad goon squad to pump nineteen

rounds into a man for the crime of standing on his own front porch, preparing to enter his home.

But now, as evidenced by the fact that the convictions of three of the officers convicted of complicity in the torture of Abner Louima were just overturned by an appellate court, all such incidents are to be forgiven. And not just in New York. No, the reflected glow of the supposed heroics of New York's finest have washed away the sins of all the nation's police forces.

Take, for example, the scandal-plagued LAPD – perhaps the most openly fascistic big city police department in the country. On October 23, 2001, just six weeks after the fall of the WTC towers, the venerable Los Angeles Times reported, in a brief story buried in the 'B' section of the paper, that the shooting of actor Anthony Dwain Lee by officer Tarriel Hopper was "in policy" and that no disciplinary action would be taken.

For those who may have missed the story of Lee's death, he was gunned down while attending a party on Halloween night of 2000. Officer Hopper, called to the house to investigate a disturbance, illegally entered the property and spied Lee through a closed window standing in a well-lit room within the house and proceeded to, for no apparent reason and without warning, summarily execute him.

That, at any rate, is the only way that I can think of to describe what happened.

The officer claimed, rather disingenuously, that the shooting was in self-defense. Lee reportedly was in possession of a replica gun, which the officer claimed was pointed in his direction. The facts of the case though indicate that Lee was not even aware of the presence of the officer, who was standing in darkness and would not have been visible to those inside the house. There is no indication that any of the revelers were aware of Hopper's presence until bullets suddenly began blasting through the window. Lee was hit four times – in the back.

Lee's gun was a non-working replica – a part of his Halloween costume. There is nothing to indicate that he was acting in anything approaching a threatening manner. He was in fact standing amid a crowd of fellow partiers, none of whom reported feeling that Lee was posing a threat to any of them, or to the unseen officer.

None of that though matters now. We are trying, it must be remembered, to fight a war on terrorism here. We certainly can't tie the hands of our law enforcement officers by preventing them from summarily executing the occasional domestic 'evildoer,' or from planting evidence and framing innocent 'suspects,' as the LAPD's CRASH unit was fond of doing.

All of that is also now forgiven and forgotten. Just two weeks after the Times reported that the killing of Lee was a "good" shooting, it reported that the city's new DA, who took office amid strident claims of being a reformer, had announced that the Rampart/CRASH probe was essentially being shut down:

"Los Angeles County prosecutors plan to close their investigation of the LAPD's Rampart scandal without bringing charges against any more officers, Dist. Atty. Steve Cooley said Wednesday. One former member of the district attorneys' Rampart investigation task force said Cooley failed to solicit or accept help from any prosecutors who were on the task force before Cooley took over."

In the post 9-11 world that we are now living in, the police can do no wrong. If you are standing in your home one night, minding your own business, and bullets suddenly rip into your body from out of nowhere ... well, that's just too damn bad. Sacrifices have to be made in time of war.

If an overzealous band of jack-booted thugs decide that kicking your door down, beating the shit out of you, planting evidence and then openly perjuring themselves in court is necessary to 'keep the peace' ... well, that's also just too damn bad. Some curtailment of civil liberties is to be expected in time of war.

Exactly one month after the Times carried the report of the aborting of the ridiculously incomplete Rampart investigation, another story carried by the paper began: "Finally, a gift for the person who has everything: an LAPD doll."

It seems the Los Angeles Police Protective League is now marketing a 12" 'action figure,' complete with LAPD uniform, gun, baton, pepper spray, handcuffs, and - as the Times noted approvingly - "enough attitude to keep the peace from Rampart to West L.A."

And to think that I didn't even know that "attitude" was what was needed to "keep the peace." Kudos to the Times for clearing that up.

When I was a young boy, at the height of the Vietnam War, we had "G.I. Joe" to play with – the male counterpart of the ubiquitous Barbie. Little did I know that my generation was being conditioned, practically from birth, to be good little soldiers. As it turned out, of course, the war ended and our services were not needed.

Now we have a new psychological warfare device masquerading as a toy, to condition a new generation of American boys for a slightly different role: domestic law enforcement officer – though the line between domestic law enforcement and overt military operations is an increasingly fine one indeed.

The training, equipment, apparel and tactics of today's police forces are virtually indistinguishable from those employed by the military. On a regular basis, Angelenos are treated to scenes on local newscasts of small armies of LAPD officers occupying a residential neighborhood in search of a suspect. These types of arrests used to be accomplished, not too many years ago, with a handful of officers and a couple of squad cars.

But not anymore. Now what we see are scores of nameless and faceless officers, outfitted with automatic weaponry and flak jackets, ferried about in armored vehicles, and with the inevitable squadron of military-style helicopters hovering overhead. It is easy to forget that these are 'civilian' police actions we are witnessing, occurring just miles from our homes.

And now your kids can recreate these exciting scenes right there in the comfort of your home. Coming soon to join 'Officer West,' the first of the LAPD action figures to be released, will be: a K-9 officer, complete with his own dog; a motorcycle officer with, naturally, his own motorcycle; an air support officer, with his own really cool helicopter; and a SWAT team member, who will of course be outfitted in full SWAT regalia.

But my own personal favorite has to be the "riot control officer," which a league spokesman gushingly told the Times is "just like you saw during the [Democratic National Convention]." It sounds too good to be true, but you can now own a scale model of the very same officers who beat you senseless with batons, trampled you with horses, shot you with rubber bullets and bean bags, sprayed you with pepper spray and noxious gasses, and arrested you for exercising your alleged constitutional right to peacefully assemble to address legitimate grievances.

And you're not going to want to buy just one of these. No, you're going to want to buy a whole bunch of them. Enough to line up along every wall of your home at least four or five deep. They'll feel much more at home that way, as that is their natural environment. They're not really designed to function well alone. They have been stripped of their ability to think independently and are only capable of a sort of mob mentality.

If, God forbid, one of your dolls should happen to die 'in the line of duty,' then you've really got a problem. In order to give them a proper send-off, you're going to have to take out a second on your house so that you can buy thousands of dolls. Then you can give the departed officer a proper funeral befitting a member of the British royal family, just like the ones we see on TV.

And why, you may ask, are our law enforcement personnel deserving of such a pompous display? Is it because the job they perform is of so much more value to society than are the jobs performed by the rest of us? I hardly think so. Educators perform a far more valuable service than do the police, and yet I can't recall ever seeing a teacher laid to rest in a ceremony rivaling the inauguration of a president.

Is it then because the police perform a job so dangerous - laying their lives on the line daily to protect the rest of us - that they are deserving of special consideration? Not really. There are any number of occupations that are far more dangerous than that performed by the police. Crab fishing in the Bering Straights is said to be the most dangerous job in the world, and yet the rather routine deaths of these brave souls are mourned by almost no one.

The case could be made that dissident writers perform a more dangerous task than do our domestic police. Just ask the surviving family and friends of such scribes as the 'suicided' Danny Casolaro and James Hatfield.

You may remember Hatfield as the author of the book Fortunate Son, released by St. Martin's Press as the 2000 presidential election campaign was taking shape and then quickly pulled from shelves and mulched under pressure from the Bush family. Hatfield turned up dead in a hotel room just weeks before September 11. His last published piece was a story in the Online Journal entitled "Why Would Osama bin Laden Want to Kill Dubya, His Former Business Partner?"

Or ask the survivors of 'former' Naval Intelligence asset William Milton Cooper, the iconoclastic author of the overrated conspiracy tome Behold a Pale Horse. Cooper was gunned down by local Sheriff's deputies (possibly at the instigation of federal authorities, according to some accounts) not long after he began devoting his radio broadcasts to promoting the idea that the September 11 attacks were an inside job.

Neither of these men, or the legions of others who came before them, were paid their final respects in ceremonies befitting the coronation of a king.

Why then this hero-worship of our nation's law enforcement personnel? Why this adulation of men who are frequently little more than criminals themselves – men who differ from those they arrest only by the fact that they are protected from the consequences of their actions by virtue of the uniforms that they wear?

This hero-worship has escalated considerably since September 11. It is instructive then to look back upon the events of that fateful day to see exactly what it was that the police did to earn their enhanced status as American heroes. Towards that end, it is always interesting, when trying to make sense of any big media story, to look back upon some of the initial press reports to emerge, before the all-consuming official spin sets in.

The UK's The Guardian, one of the world's most respected English language newspapers, ran a lengthy report from ground zero by a trio of its reporters the day after the alleged 'terrorist' attacks. Here is how they described situation on the ground just after the first tower collapsed – well over an hour after the ordeal had begun:

"First a stampede; flying glass cutting into flesh and ripping the clothes of those who fled - and no sign whatsoever of the authorities, only a police officer running about like a headless chicken (in the wrong direction) shouting: 'Get outta here!'" Later in the report it was added that: "The full rescue operation was slow to arrive."

Still further along in the report, we find a representative of the NYPD treating the traumatized victims of the tower collapses exactly as a cynic might expect them to: "Even the smallest unrelated incident created conflict. A man who left his briefcase in the street was accosted by a cop. 'What you doing? Hey, just keep walking.'"

Such actions, apparently, are the makings of great American heroes.

A number of other interesting details emerged in the report from The Guardian – details that to this day have not been addressed by the media, including the so-called alternative/progressive media. These details beg rather obvious questions that have gone completely unasked by our gloriously 'free' American press.

For instance, there is the rather interesting fact that: "People were trying desperately to get through on cell phones that were no longer functioning." Very few accounts of the events of that day have noted that cell phones throughout the affected area suddenly stopped working. Why would this be so? Why should a building fire and collapse cause widespread cell phone failure?

Another interesting tidbit of information to emerge from The Guardian was that: "At a junction where the traffic lights had stuck on red a man in a flak jacket and combat trousers took it upon himself to direct the sparse traffic." Who was this rather curiously attired man and what was he doing at ground zero?

And consider this rather curious factoid: "One stockbroker, Alan Redmond, said he had arrived for work at the Nasdaq exchange to be told that there was a delay in opening, and to wait." Why was there a delay in opening the Nasdaq that morning, and how many prominent lives were spared due to this 'delay'?

Lastly, consider that "a 47-storey building which was part of the trade centre complex also collapsed, brought down by flying debris and fire." How is it possible that a third high-rise, and one which was not struck by a plane and doused with jet fuel, collapsed in identical fashion to the two towers? If it was due to a weakening of the structure caused by falling debris, then how is it that a building which lay between the twin towers and the third fallen structure remains standing?

These, alas, are but a few of the nagging questions that remain unasked, and certainly unanswered, in the months since "everything changed." Sadly, one thing that definitely hasn't changed is the unfathomable cravenness of the U.S. media.

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Lee Harvey Oswald Goes to Nanterre

David McGowan
April 18, 2002

"*These days, France is a tough place to be a cop*." [1]

So said the Los Angeles Times on March 22, 2002. The timing of this report was rather curious, to say the least, though that fact wouldn't become apparent until a few days later – when a man named Richard Durn paid a visit to the city council chambers of Nanterre, France.

The Times article was intended to be an exposé on the rampant levels of lawlessness and lack of respect for law enforcement that are allegedly sweeping the nation of France, leading to what reporter Sebastian Rotella called "a time of discontent for French police. Crime was up 7.6% in 2001, continuing a trend marked by what police union officials say was a fourfold increase in physical and verbal assaults on officers in the last five years. Last year, more than 600 officers were attacked while on duty." [2]

The blame for this state of affairs was laid, naturally enough, squarely on the shoulders of the politicians of various left-wing persuasions who populate the French political structure. Where else to place the blame but on those criminal-coddling politicians who - according to the Times - "seem out of touch with the street"? [3]

Fueling this crime wave, alluded the newspaper, is a law enforcement reform measure passed last year aimed at guaranteeing suspects "immediate access to a lawyer and other Miranda-type safeguards," to combat what the Times described as "an inquisitorial justice culture that had created one of Europe's largest populations of suspects jailed while awaiting trial or indictment." [4]

The reform measure actually went beyond the safeguards established here in the U.S. by the Miranda decision (which is currently slated for review by the same people who appointed the president). It includes, for example, provisions for webcams to be used to monitor the interrogation of juveniles, and for medical doctors to be brought in to determine if a suspect has been physically abused while in custody.

This purportedly 'soft-on-crime' reform measure, the Times would have us believe, has led to an unprecedented level of brazenness among France's 'criminal element.'

The "most outrageous case" cited as an example by the Times "was the ambush slaying in October of two officers responding to a home invasion. Suspect Jean-Claude Bonnal, an ex-convict accused of killing four civilians two weeks earlier in a holdup, had been released on bail the previous December--even though he was awaiting trial for a department store robbery that left nine wounded." [5]

Bonnal was free to roam the streets, implied the Times, because of the restrictions placed on law enforcement by the legal reforms. A cynic might ponder whether he wasn't deliberately unleashed upon society in order to teach the people a lesson about the consequences of 'coddling' criminals. In any event, the double slaying of the officers brought to eight the number of law enforcement personnel killed last year in France.

It also proved to be the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back: "Resentment in the ranks boiled over in November. National police officers held demonstrations across the country. Then came the turn of the gendarmerie, the force that patrols the rural areas." [6] The demonstrations were said to be spawned by spiraling crime rates, police resentment of the law enforcement reform measure, and the political establishment's alleged lack of support for the law enforcement community.

What the police demonstrations appear to actually have been though is an integral part of a campaign in which fear of supposedly rampant criminality is being manufactured and manipulated to push a law-and-order agenda that is clearly intended to push the French electorate in the direction of the most right-wing elements of the French political structure – precisely mirroring, in every detail, the psychological warfare campaign that has been waged here in the States for the last several decades.

Crime in France has, no doubt, been on the rise in recent years. The Guardian has reported that: "France's crime rate surged by a record 8% last year, exceeding 4m offences for the first time in the country's history. Violent crimes, particularly armed robberies, increased by 9.8%, while the number of rapes rose by 13.2% and there was a sharp rise in offences carried out by under-13s." [7]

The Independent, however, offered a different take on France's recent rise in criminality: "Never mind the statistics, which show that the French murder rate has been falling steadily (as has the American murder rate) … Never mind the fact that, despite an undoubted surge in the last few years, most violent crime in France remains far below the levels in Britain or Germany." [8]

And never mind that the levels of violent crime in the UK and Germany remain but a pale shadow of the violent crime levels here in the United States – the largely undisputed world-heavyweight-champion of violent crime. In the year 2000, the entire nation of France (population 60 million) recorded 1,051 homicides; by way of comparison, Los Angeles County alone (population 9.5 million) recorded a nearly identical number of murders. [9]

Missing from virtually all press accounts of the supposed crimewave sweeping France has been any sort of analysis of the underlying social causes of the relatively mild levels of rising criminality. The World Socialist Web Site provided some of the missing context:

"For some years now, successive French governments have been reducing the cost to the state and to employers of unemployment insurance and other social benefits. There are now 2,200,000 unemployed in France, 9 percent of the population. In some areas, youth unemployment approaches 50 percent. An estimated 4 million people live in poverty, including many who have jobs, and France has the highest youth suicide rate in Europe." [10]

The WSWS also reproduced a letter written to the editor of the French daily Liberation which reflected the levels of despair and frustration felt by many French youth. The letter read, in part: "We are the first generation since the Second World War to earn less than our parents. Our future is uncertain." [11] Indeed it is, as is the future of all inhabitants of planet Earth.

The erosion of social services, needless to say, is an idea imported from America, so it is hardly surprising that it would be coupled with what the L.A. Times described as an eruption of "U.S.-style street violence." [12] Facilitating the rise in high-profile violent crime has been "the increased presence of assault rifles and other heavy weapons smuggled from the Balkans." [13] "Once smugglers enter the European Union, the absence of borders makes for booming business." [14]

It should go without saying that the increased presence of military-style weaponry, particularly in what we like to refer to as the 'inner cities,' has also fueled the rise in "U.S.-style street violence" right here in the U.S.. It should also go without saying that most of those weapons currently flowing through the Balkans into Europe originate right here in the munitions factories of U.S. 'defense' contractors.

While the erosion of the social safety net and the infusion of guns have certainly led to higher rates of crime, the perception being generated - of violent crime running rampant through the streets of France - is largely an illusion. This illusion is being created by both an unprecedented rise in the occurrence of ultra-violent rampage killings, and a media fixation on crime that is wildly out of proportion to the problem.

That is, alas, the script that has been followed here in America to incrementally push the people to support a right-wing 'law-and-order' agenda that has resulted in a wholesale stripping away of civil rights, due process rights and privacy rights. Accompanying that has been a pronounced race-baiting that has led to rising racial tensions in this country and a prison population composed largely of African-Americans and Hispanics.

It is notable then that the Los Angeles Times has commented that among the "most worrisome trends" in France has been "a spreading drug-and-thug culture, especially among the young men of North African descent." [15] Ahhh, yes ... if it wasn't for the inherent criminality of those 'inferior races,' with their penchant for 'gang-banging,' we could lick this crime problem once and for all.

Never mind that the modern-day "drug-and-thug culture" is largely a product of CIA covert operations that dumped a toxic mixture of guns and crack cocaine into the country's 'inner cities' in the 1980s. That is not to say that gangs and gang violence didn't exist before that time. Certainly they did. But just as certain is that the Iran/Contra operations fundamentally changed the nature of crime in America's impoverished neighborhoods, which then became the justification for the complete militarization of 'big city' police departments.

The WSWS noted that "Outbreaks of extreme violence by desperate individuals are associated in France with the United States. But these problems have increasingly surfaced in France as well. Over the last 10 years there have been at least 17 such incidents, often ending with the suicide of the perpetrator." [16] The L.A. Times reported that three such mass murders have been committed just in the last eight months. [17]

The same Times report noted that "the French have been shocked by acts of unprecedented viciousness. Headlines speak of brazen cop-killers, gang rapists prowling housing projects, and schoolyard extortionists." [18] The Guardian added that: "Near blanket media coverage of incidents of youth crime has helped to keep the issue firmly in the public eye." [19]

Such sensationalized crime reporting, including the demonizing of youth, [20] has been a staple of the American print and broadcast media for quite some time, and has aided immeasurably in rallying public support for the rolling back of constitutional protections. As the National Criminal Justice Commission noted in a February 1996 report: "When national news wants to excite viewers, it scours the nation for the day's most titillating crime, and broadcasts it everywhere. The result is a popular sense that rare and extreme crimes happen around every corner." [21]

Vincent Schiraldi, the director of the Justice Policy Institute, explained to the Christian Science Monitor in November 1997 how such reporting skews public perception of crime: "For example, since 1993, the homicide rate nationwide dropped by 20%. Yet since 1993, coverage of murders on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news increased by an astonishing 721%. As a result, in 1993 alone, the number of Americans ranking crime as the number one problem increased six fold." [22]

And so it is in France as the country heads into a presidential election in which "the leading candidates [and the press] have made law-and-order issues and juvenile delinquency a major theme of their campaigns." [23] Assisting in keeping the people's attention focused on law-and-order issues and the looming menace of violent crime has been a steady stream of those once uniquely American creations – rampage killers.

And just as in America, France's versions of rampage/spree/mass murderers have followed a time-honored script, as though they have all attended the same Rampage Killer Training Academy. With a few minor variations, that script generally reads something like this: a man described as a loner (though the facts frequently contradict that description) suddenly explodes in an orgy of violence, gunning down - in a coldly professional, emotionless manner - as many people as possible, before turning his guns on himself – thereby preempting any sort of a meaningful investigation of the crime and ensuring that the 'evidence' in the case will never be aired in open court.

Richard Durn apparently had read a copy of that script. At 1:15 AM the morning of March 27 - after sitting in the public gallery of Nanterre's city council chambers through some six hours of tedious local political wrangling, and after waiting until all other visitors had cleared out - Durn approached the gathered group of forty or so elected officials without saying a word and opened fire with a dizzying barrage of semi-automatic handgun fire, shooting his initial victims in the back. [24] "The attack was," according to the BBC's Paris correspondent, "clearly prepared in advance." [25]

When it was all over, eight local councillors lay dead and another nineteen were wounded (early reports claimed that as many as 30 were wounded). The council chambers were littered with dozens of spent shell casings and, according to a Paris fire brigade spokesman, Captain Laurent Vibert, "There are at least 50 bullet impacts in the council chamber. According to our first reports, he used at least five ammunition clips." [26]

The mass murder was - according to the local mayor, who survived the rampage - "conducted with clinical precision." [27] Press reports were littered with descriptions of a preternaturally calm, emotionally-detached killer.

The Irish Times commented that: "Eyewitnesses were struck by Mr Durn's calm, methodical manner." [28] The BBC reported that: "The gunman who opened fire on a council meeting in Paris acted methodically and calmly, working his way around the room as he shot his victims, witnesses say." [29] One councillor/witness told the Guardian that: "He was shooting at anything that moved … but he was completely calm." [30]

Other witnesses noted that "Mr Durn did not utter a word while spraying the room with bullets." [31] One unidentified official told the BBC that Durn "was very calm. He didn't look like a crazy person at all." [32] Christian Brunet, a councillor/witness, told the Independent: "He didn't say a word. He must have used three or four magazines. He had a second pistol in his belt. It was like being in a horror film. He shot the councillors in the front row, coldly, one by one." [33]

It was a performance that seemed to borrow heavily from The Terminator: "Witnesses say the man had two or three guns, and was shooting with both hands at once … Others described how he calmly reloaded his weapons before carrying on." [34] Two of those guns, which Durn was apparently firing simultaneously, were Glock 9mm semi-automatics.

Durn was eventually overpowered – but not without considerable effort. He seemed to be oblivious to attempts by witnesses/victims to stop his rampage: "At least one councillor reportedly threw a chair at the gunman to try to knock him to the ground. Another person tried to wrestle him to the floor. But witnesses said the man never stopped shooting." [35]

One can almost picture Ahhnuld calmly reloading and robotically firing with both hands even as chairs and would-be attackers bounce off of him.

Several councillors ultimately braved the barrage of bullets to disarm and contain Durn. As they did so, the well-armed Durn pulled out yet a third gun, "a .357 magnum handgun which he fired at those trying to overpower him." [36]

Had he not been stopped, Durn's performance was apparently scheduled to include his own suicide as the final act – most likely to be performed with the .357 he had tucked in his belt and which he produced as soon as he realized that the show was drawing to a close. After being overpowered, he reportedly screamed "kill me, kill me."[37] It was later reported that: "Police said Durn admitted during questioning that he planned to kill himself after gunning down the councillors." [38]

Most press accounts portrayed Durn as the proverbial 'deranged loner' – noting that he was unemployed, unmarried and still living with his mother, and that he had a long history of mental illness. LeMonde, for instance, reported that: "He did not have friends, nor a known girlfriend, and he lived with his mother." [39] But Durn did in fact have political connections, and was well-known within the council chambers where the shootings took place.

One witness told the BBC that: "He comes to all the council meetings and had no motive to do this." [40] Other witnesses reported that "some councillors had chatted with him before the debate on the local budget." [41] The Irish Times held that not only did Durn speak "to several of the men and women he was about to murder ... he joked with some of them." [42] Some of the councillors in the room that night had served alongside of Durn in the local chapter of the League of Human Rights, an organization for which Durn had at one time served as treasurer. [43]

Most media accounts also presented the mass murder as a motiveless, random act of violence. Police referred to it as "motiveless dementia," [44] while prime minister Lionel Jospin spoke of "a case of furious dementia." [45] The Independent though talked to some eyewitnesses who said that "Durn selected his targets. They said he seemed to know precisely which councillors he wanted to kill, starting with the Greens and Communists." [46] A later report by Reuters claimed that Durn had "intended to kill only the Communist mayor, according to a confession published by LeParisien newspaper yesterday." [47]

If Durn's intent was to kill leftists, then he certainly chose the right place to launch his attack. There is certainly no shortage of "Greens and Communists" in Nanterre, which has been described as a "staunchly communist blue-collar suburb" [48] located in "the so-called 'Red Belt' of left-wing municipalities surrounding the capital." [49] The Independent offered a bleak description of Nanterre as "a neat, soulless, working-class enclave." [50]

Durn himself was described in most press reports as a leftist, though at least one journalist commented on the fact that his supposed leftist leanings were contradicted by his well-documented fascination with guns. Nevertheless, he apparently registered with the Socialist Party in 1995 before switching to the Green Party in 2001; that same year, he joined the League of Human Rights. [51]

Beyond that, the details of Durn's life remain rather murky. He was the son of an immigrant mother whom he lived with. The identity of his father, interestingly, is said to be unknown. Durn was reportedly highly intelligent and very well educated, with a "history degree and a masters in political sciences." [52] LeMonde reported that, at school, "he was exceptionally gifted, so much so that he was bored in class." [53] The Guardian concurred, noting that he was: "Considered brilliant at school." [54]

Despite his intelligence and academic prowess, Durn appears to have an almost non-existent employment history and he was unemployed at the time of the shootings. For the past four years, he has spent part of his time going on what were described as "humanitarian" missions to Bosnia and Kosovo. [55] Bosnia and Kosovo, it should be noted, are the focus of an array of Western intelligence-run covert operations, as well as being the source for the military-style guns flooding into Europe – guns not unlike the ones wielded by Richard Durn.

How Durn maintained possession of those guns in a country known for having tough gun control laws remains very much a mystery. As Time's European edition noted: "Legally possessing such a weapon is difficult in France," though the magazine purports that: "Durn qualified because he was an active member of a shooting club in a nearby town." [56]

Many press reports echo the claim that Durn was allowed a license for his guns because he was a sport shooter with a membership in a shooting club. Unmentioned in these reports is the fact that the guns owned by Durn were hardly of the sort used by sport shooters. As the Independent correctly noted, the "Glock is a lightweight, hi-tech, automatic pistol used by bodyguards and assassins." [57]

Even if one accepts that these decidedly non-sporting guns were owned for sport shooting, there is still the question of why the guns were not confiscated two years ago, when Durn allowed his license to expire. As Adam Sage wrote in the UK's The Times: "Durn had been allowed to keep the guns that he used in the shootings despite the expiry of his three-year firearms licence in 2000." [58]

The expiration of the license alone should have resulted in the confiscation of the weapons. In addition to that, Durn had exhibited what the L.A. Times described as "a history of ominous behavior." [59] The Times was referring to the fact that, in 1998, Durn had "threatened a psychiatrist with a handgun." [60] And yet, even with this threat to the doctor "at a social security office," his guns still were not confiscated. [61]

There is also the question of why Durn's psychiatric history did not disqualify him from gun ownership. As The Irish Times recounted: "He had been under psychiatric care since 1990, and took the anti-depressant drug Prozac." [62] This is, alas, yet another element of the script that they apparently teach at the Rampage Killer Training Academy; the overwhelming majority of America's spree killers have had a fondness for ingesting so-called 'anti-depressant' drugs.

During his twelve years of psychiatric treatment, Durn had reportedly made two suicide attempts and had on at least one occasion been confined to a mental hospital. France's LeFigaro marveled at how it was that a man with a lengthy psychiatric history, who had already shown himself to be a danger both to himself and to others, and who was knowingly in illegal possession of three weapons which had been unregistered for over two years, had somehow managed to avoid having those weapons seized. [63]

Durn was, notably, never charged with any crime in connection with his armed threat at a government office. It would seem almost as though someone wanted him roaming the streets of France with his mini-arsenal.

After being overpowered in the council chambers, Durn was taken into custody by French police. The young man who had previously been joking with his victims - before coldly and methodically gunning them down - was by that time said to be "speaking incoherently." [64] He reportedly told his captors that he felt "very awkward in his skin" [65], as though - perhaps - he felt he had lost control over his actions.

Shortly after 10:00 AM on the morning of March 28 - 33 hours after Durn unleashed a barrage of bullets inside a building described as an ultra-modern, concrete and glass pyramid - the 33-year-old gunman allegedly committed suicide while being questioned in the Quai des Orfevres, described as "the French equivalent of Scotland Yard."[66]

As the Associated Press described it: "Durn was being interrogated in a locked fifth-floor room when he bolted to a closed window, according to [an official police] statement. It said he opened the window and began climbing out." [67] At the time, Durn "was being questioned by two senior officers, a captain and a brigadier, when he was asked to stand up and sign a statement." [68]

According to the official police account: "The two officials tried to stop him by grabbing his legs, but the determination of the suspect, whose body was already mostly out of the window, thwarted that attempt." [69] The police statement also claimed that: "One officer injured his hand trying to haul [Durn] back in." [70] Once out the window, Durn allegedly scurried across the roof and then plunged to his death.

This official story is, needless to say, not without its problems. Questions have been raised about why the suspect was not handcuffed or otherwise restrained, as well as why he wasn't being held in a secure mental facility rather than a jail (strangely enough, the French apparently recognize that the mentally ill should be treated differently than other suspects).

Perhaps the most obvious question raised is exactly how a man being closely monitored by at least two experienced officers had time to get to a window, open it, and then climb through it before anyone had a chance to restrain him. This is an especially troubling question in light of the fact that the window, variously described as a "fanlight" or a "skylight," was quite small and was located 1.6 meters off the floor (slightly more than five feet). [71]

As a leading Parisian lawyer, Jean-Louis Pelletier, commented to The Times: "It is perfectly obvious to everyone that you need time to climb through a skylight." [72] Lucien Batard, the deputy mayor of Nanterre, asked pointedly: "How can you kill yourself at police headquarters? I didn't think that someone at criminal police headquarters would have so much liberty of movement that he could jump out of a window." [73]

Apparently a number of French citizens didn't think so either. Agence France-Presses reported that the alleged

suicide "caused sharp protests, particularly on behalf of the mayor of Nanterre, Jacqueline Fraysse." [74]

There were obvious signs that a struggle had preceded Durn's 'suicide.' The Guardian reported that Durn's body was "missing one shoe and a sock, perhaps as a result of the struggle." [75] LeMonde added that the "clothing of Richard Durn was, moreover, drawn backwards." [76] These signs of struggle were universally attributed to the officers' alleged efforts to thwart Durn's suicide, though they could just as easily have been the result of Durn's captors' efforts to assist in his 'suicide.'

John Lichfield wrote in the Independent that Durn's timely suicide assured that "the massacre in the suburban council chamber may never be fully explained." [77] Just as, one might note, the death while in police custody of that most famous of 'deranged loners,' Lee Harvey Oswald, assured that the shootings in Dallas would never be fully explained.

Mayor Fraysse observed that "there will be no trial. The families will not know. They had a right to know." [78] Indeed they did, as did the families of the victims of so many of America's rampage killers who have self-destructed before their stories could be told.

John Lichfield wrote in the Independent that Durn "joins a long list of mass killers, including ... Mark Barton, a day trader in Atlanta who killed his family and then nine others at his office in 1999, James Huberty who killed 21 people in a McDonald's restaurant in San Diego in 1984, and Charles Whitman who shot dead 16 people from a tower at the University of Texas in 1966." [79]

None of these men, who were notably all Americans, survived to stand trial. The families of their victims are still waiting to hear what really motivated their murderous rampages. There is some indication that at least one of these legendary mass murderers, Charles Whitman, had received intelligence training while serving as a Marine. [80]

It doesn't seem entirely out of line to ponder whether Richard Durn was a covert intelligence operative. While hard evidence is lacking, there is a circumstantial case to be made: his murky family history, sketchy employment records, documented political connections, questionable leftist credentials, inexplicably lax treatment by law enforcement officials, and mysterious sojourns to the Balkans all point in that direction.

Time proclaimed that: "Last week's mass murder of eight city councilors in a Paris suburb … set France searching for political meaning in a fundamentally senseless act." [81] But was it a senseless act, or was it an overtly political act? Aren't all 'rampage' killings, in the final analysis, political acts? They certainly, at the very least, are exploited for political gain.

Durn's shooting rampage is expected to have very specific political consequences, which were spelled out in an April 3 report from the BBC. Even while claiming that in "normal circumstances, of course, a massacre by a disturbed individual would play no part in a general debate on crime" (a dubious claim at best), reporter Sheila Bartner wrote that: "But when Richard Durn carried out his murderous attack, he may have inadvertently done more than unleash grief and tragedy in this pleasant Paris suburb. It is just possible he has intervened decisively in the French presidential election … Mr Chirac may have two trump cards after Nanterre – his stronger image on law and order, and his traditional role as a man of the people … The tragedy of Nanterre allows Mr Chirac to play both cards. If Mr Chirac can avoid over-playing it, then Richard Durn may just have dealt him a winning hand." [82]

A winning hand that he wouldn't otherwise have held. Prior to the Durn affair, Chirac was trailing in the polls behind the country's Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin – despite persistent attacks from the right on Jospin's alleged "poor record on crime." [83] Chirac has been, notably, "campaigning on a 'zero-tolerance' law and order stance similar to that of New York." [84]

Similar, that is, to the agenda implemented by Mayor Rudolf Giuliani – widely viewed as an overtly fascist agenda before Rudy was resurrected by the media as 'America's Mayor' in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Numerous prominent voices of the right in France quickly seized upon the Nanterre massacre. Presidential candidiate Alain Madelin, for example, said "the killing spree exemplified French society's dangerous drift toward 'American-style violence.'" [85] How better to remedy that then than through the implementation of American-style fascism?

Bruno Megret of the National Movement, described by the Independent as one of France's more "extreme right-wing voices," insisted that "Durn's actions were part of a 'collapse of traditional values, a descent into barbarism.'" [86] Such language has been a staple of far-right opinion shapers here in the United States for quite some time.

If these voices of the right carry the day in France, then Richard Durn will do for Jacques Chirac what Willie Horton did for George H.W. Bush.

As for Jospin, he has, "like many French leftwingers ... long tried to play down the law-and-order issue as a right-twing, or even far-right, scare tactic." For that reason, according to the Guardian, "as he seeks to stop Mr Chirac from running away with the election's crunch issue, he remains more or less stuck with the left's traditional view that crime is partly the fault of society, whereas the right sees the offender as wholly responsible." [87]

It can be quite a burden to be "stuck" with promoting the truth when one is embroiled in a political campaign based on lies, smears, and disinformation aimed at discrediting those voices that do attempt to speak the truth about such issues as the causes of crime. Fortunately for our politicians here in America, such burdens don't exist since nobody even pretends to want to tell the truth. That, of course, doesn't stop the 'right' from relentlessly attacking what passes for the 'left' for being 'soft on crime.'

The attacks of last September 11, probably the most highly-publicized mass murder of all time, have been used by the illegitimate Bush administration to solidify support among the American people for a decidedly reactionary agenda, and to cast the previous - purportedly 'leftist' - administration as 'soft on terrorism.' In the same way, the attack in Nanterre is being used to push the French electorate to the right.

Perhaps it is appropriate then that among the "scores of police and firefighters" who were brought in to assist with tending to the victims in the Nanterre council chambers was a "contingent of New York City firemen currently visiting the Paris area." [88] It always helps to have people on-hand with experience in dealing with the aftermath of choreographed tragedies.

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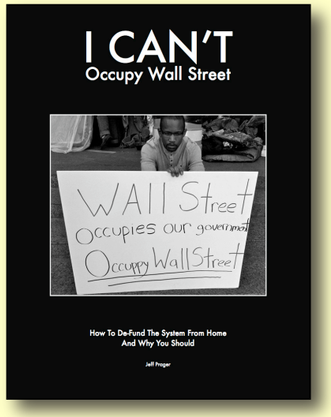

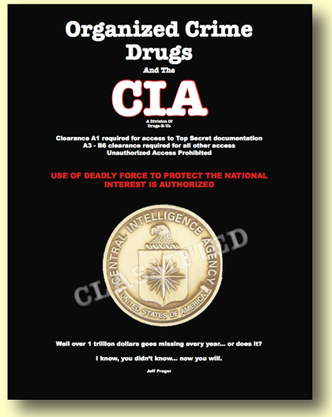

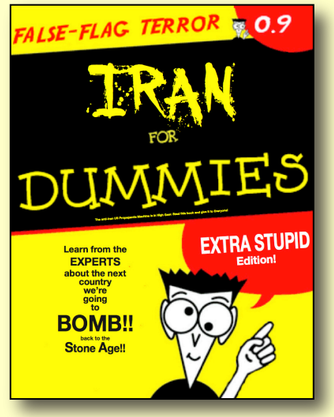

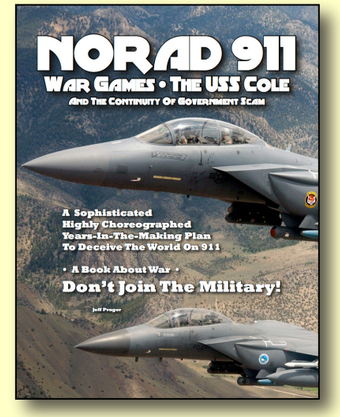

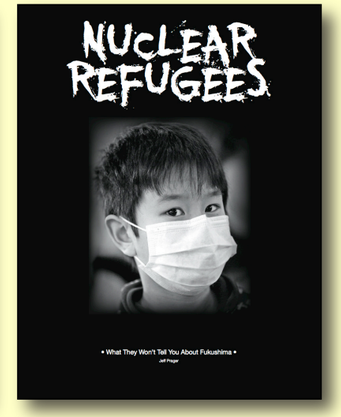

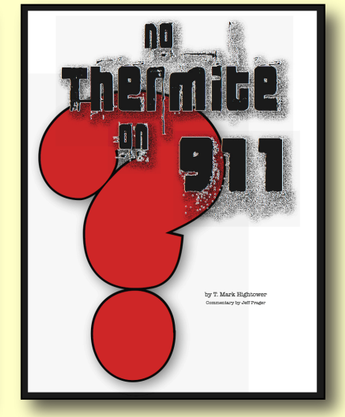

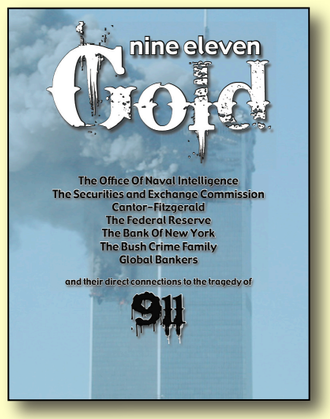

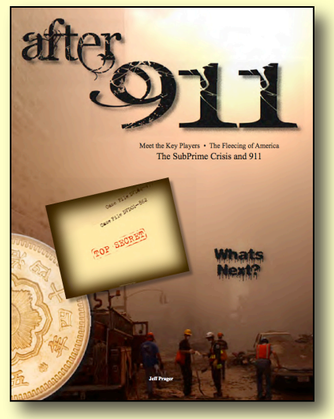

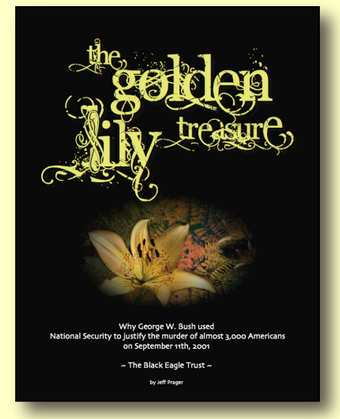

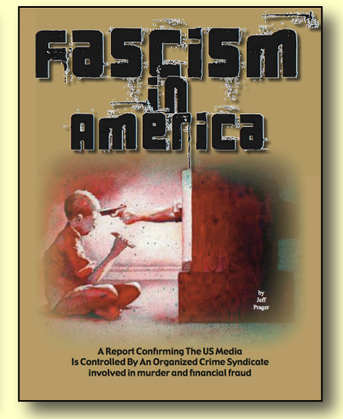

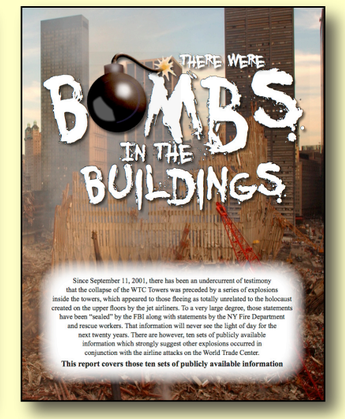

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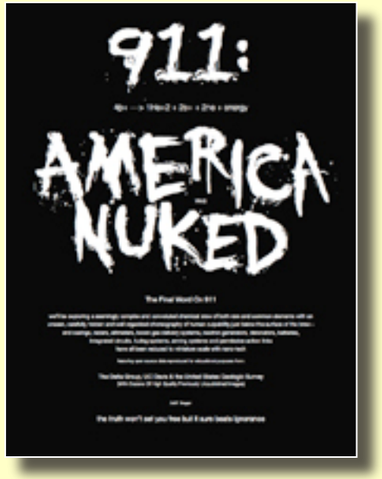

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